



Substantive Change Policy and Procedures

Table of Contents

1. Policy	2
Overview	2
Compliance	2
Non-compliance	4
2. Procedures	5
General Requirements	5
Specific Requirements by Type of Substantive Change	12
Institutional Changes	12
Program Changes	25
Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes	43
SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION	54
Committee Visits	56
International Off-campus Instructional Sites	57
Fees and Expenses	59
Review Fee	59
Substantive Change Committee Visit Fee and Expenses	59
Review Procedures	60
Staff Options	60
Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review of the Prospectus or Application	60
Preparation for a Substantive Change Committee Visit	61
Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review by a Substantive Change Committee	61
Teach-outs	61
3. Appendices	63
Appendix A: What to Submit for Approvals	63
Common Content	64
Institutional Changes	67
Program Changes	74
Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes	80
Appendix B: Glossary	84
Appendix C: Summary of Recent Changes	87

1. Policy

Overview

The Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) substantive change policy and procedures assure the public that all aspects of an institution continue to meet standards. It helps ensure substantive changes, if approved, do not hinder an institution's ability to continue meeting the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*.

A substantive change is 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.

SACSCOC accredits an entire institution. Accreditation extends to all programs and services of an institution wherever located and however delivered. SACSCOC does not accredit individual programs, locations, or portions of an institution. However, some new programs, locations, and other institutional changes are subject to notification and/or approval as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

Compliance

Substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credential).
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.

- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
- Substantially increase or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.
- Adding competency-based education programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.

Other substantive change requirements, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change.
- An institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2 (Substantive change) of the *Principles of Accreditation* and with the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* and related policies, viz.,
 - [Advertising and Student Recruitment](#) [PDF];
 - [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) [PDF];
 - [Credit Hours](#) [PDF];
 - [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) [PDF];
 - [Distance and Correspondence Education](#) [PDF];
 - [Dual Enrollment](#) [PDF];
 - [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF]; and
 - [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF].
- An institution is required to have a written substantive change policy and procedure. It must be approved through institutional processes and published in institutional documents accessible to those affected. The purpose of the institution's substantive change policy and procedure is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion as required by *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. Institutions are responsible for implementing and enforcing their substantive change policy and procedure.

- An institution's fiscal and administrative capability to operate off-campus instructional sites is assessed when a new site is reviewed for approval and as part of decennial and fifth-year interim reviews.
- A new off-campus instructional site is subject to a substantive change committee visit. A committee visit, when necessary, is authorized when a site is approved. The committee visit ensures the site has the personnel, facilities, and resources identified by an institution in its application or prospectus and ensures the quality of instructional and support services offered at the site.
- Different or additional requirements apply to an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION. Restriction applies if an institution has been placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause over the prior three academic years, or if an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs.

An institution is required to submit an institutional contingency teach-out plan to SACSCOC within 30 days of notification if the institution is placed or continued on Probation or Probation for Good Cause, or if the institution meets conditions enumerated in the procedures section of this policy originating from the U.S. Department of Education or state authority.

Non-compliance

If an institution is non-compliant with *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* or Standard 14.2 (Substantive change), its accreditation may be in jeopardy. An unreported substantive change may require a review of the institution's substantive change policy and procedures document by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Non-compliance subjects the institution to monitoring, sanction, or removal from membership. Failure to secure approval, if required, of a substantive change involving programs or locations that qualify for title IV federal funding may place the institution in jeopardy with the U.S. Department of Education, including reimbursement of funds received related to an unreported substantive change. For additional information, refer to Appendix A, Standards and Policy Addressing Unreported Substantive Change, in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

2. Procedures

General Requirements

General requirements universally apply to most or all types of substantive change. They address obligations and processes by an institution and by SACSCOC. Specific requirements are addressed by substantive change type, organized by institutional changes, off-campus instructional site / additional location changes, and program changes.

1. **Submission deadlines:** Substantive change prospectus, application, and notification submission deadlines depend on (1) the type of SACSCOC Board of Trustees review, if required (see also the Board review pathways explained below), and (2) the intended implementation date of the substantive change.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the full Board of Trustees (which meets biannually), to be implemented after the date of the Board meeting, the submission deadlines are

- **March 15** for review at the Board’s biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year, and
- **September 1** for review at the Board’s biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (which meets year-round), the submission deadlines are

- **January 1** for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year, and
- **July 1** for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring notification only, it can be submitted any time before implementation. Once the institution has submitted notification, it may implement before receiving a response from SACSCOC. If there are deficiencies or additional information needed about the notification, the institutional liaison will be contacted at the time of review for resolution and before action is taken. This applies to notifications only, not to approvals: changes requiring approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

For a substantive change to close a program, site, program at a site, or method of delivery, a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close (i.e., stop admitting students).

2. **Accreditation cycle:** Some types of substantive change affect an institution's reaffirmation of accreditation cycle:
 - a. a merger/consolidation or change of ownership normally affects the reaffirmation cycle;
 - b. a change of governance, means of control, or legal status or form may affect the reaffirmation cycle;
 - c. acquiring a program(s) or site(s) from another institution normally will not affect the reaffirmation cycle;
 - d. all other types of substantive change normally will not affect the reaffirmation cycle;
 - e. extensive substantive changes may affect the reaffirmation cycle.
3. **Appeal of substantive change decision:** A substantive change that is denied approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees is not appealable. All actions are final. An institution may revise and resubmit a prospectus or application without prejudice.
4. **Appeal, litigation, and arbitration:** A SACSCOC accredited institution in the appeals process or in litigation or arbitration with SACSCOC is not eligible for substantive change.
5. **Applicants and candidates:** Applicant and candidate institutions may not initiate substantive change. However, if required, an institutional contingency teach-out plan or an institution closure teach-out plan as described in policy applies to applicant and candidate institutions. The institutional contingency teach-out plan is addressed by candidate institutions in their Candidacy Report and not as a substantive change.
6. **Approval date:** The approval date of a substantive change is the date of the SACSCOC response letter. A substantive change is included in the scope of the institution's accreditation as of the approval date.
7. **Board review pathways:** Approval, or denial of approval, of a proposed substantive change is granted:
 - a. by the full Board of Trustees, or
 - b. by the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees on behalf of the full Board.

The types of substantive changes reviewed by the full Board versus the Executive Council of the Board are defined in the section of the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* that addresses specific substantive changes. Exceptions are noted below.

The full Board of Trustees meets biannually, typically in June and December. The Executive Council of the Board of Trustees meets approximately every two weeks except December through mid-January. Published submission deadlines apply.

Exceptions:

There are exceptions, based on the conditions or characteristics of an institution, that require review and action by the full Board of Trustees rather than the Executive Council of the Board.

Review by the full Board of Trustees is required if any of the following apply:

- a. An institution is on sanction (Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause) at the time the substantive change prospectus or application is submitted.

Exceptions:

- i. If an institution submitted a substantive change prospectus or application and is subsequently placed on sanction, the proposed change may be referred to the full Board of Trustees or may at the sole discretion of SACSCOC staff be reviewed by staff and referred to the Executive Council of the Board for action.
- ii. A substantive change
 1. to close a program, a site, a program at a site, or a method of delivery;
 2. for an institutional contingency teach-out plan; or
 3. for an institution closure

may be reviewed by staff and referred to the Executive Council of the Board for action even if the institution is on sanction. The institution's sanction status is disclosed to the Executive Council at the time of review.

- b. An institution has recently been removed from sanction for non-compliance with Standards 13.1 (Financial resources), 13.2 (Financial documents), or 13.3 (Financial responsibility).
8. **Deferral:** A substantive change submission reviewed by staff may be deferred for additional information or explanation from the institution. If, after review and two deferrals, staff in its sole judgment does not have a sufficient basis to accept notification or recommend approval, then the notification, prospectus or application will be referred to the full Board of Trustees at its earliest possible regularly scheduled biannual meeting. The institution has a maximum of 180 days to respond to a deferral; otherwise, the submission is rejected. The institution may revise and resubmit at its discretion.
 9. **Disclosure:** At the time a substantive change is submitted for approval, this institution is required to disclose on the Substantive Change Cover Sheet that must accompany each submission if the institution
 - a. is currently on sanction (Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause),
 - b. has been on sanction within the last three academic years,
 - c. is currently under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs as defined in defined in 34 C.F.R. § 668.13, or
 - d. is currently on reimbursement for title IV federal student aid programs.

This information determines if the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION or if approvals are subject to review only by the full Board of Trustees at its biannual meetings (rather than the Executive Council of the Board). This information is disclosed on the Substantive Change Cover Sheet that must accompany each submission.

10. **Extensive changes:** Extensive substantive changes may accelerate an institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation. Accelerated reaffirmation may be triggered by, but not limited to,
 - a. a significant change in the number of off-campus instructional sites including branch campuses,
 - b. a significant change in the number of programs,
 - c. a significant change in enrollment, and
 - d. frequent mergers/consolidations or acquisitions.
11. **Implementation date:** The intended implementation date, or effective date, is provided by the institution and is part of the prospectus or application review. The intended implementation date cannot pre-date either an earlier denial of the substantive change or the date the substantive change prospectus or application is submitted. Substantive changes cannot be retroactively approved. If a substantive change has already been implemented without approval and thus constitutes an unreported substantive change, the implementation date is the date of approval, invariant to the intended implementation date provided by the institution. For mergers/consolidations and acquisitions and changes in ownership, the implementation or effective date must occur within 30 days of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval of the change.
12. **Implementation time limit:** Approved substantive changes – except for those changes that must be implemented within 30 days as defined in policy – must be implemented within two years of the approval date. If an institution does not implement within two years of approval, then a new prospectus or application must be submitted and approved prior to implementation. An institution may request an implementation extension for cause, subject to SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval.
13. **Maintaining off-campus instructional site / additional locations accuracy and completeness:** An institution is obligated to maintain an accurate record with SACSCOC of off-campus instructional site names and addresses. A site name or address change is submitted to SACSCOC as a substantive change notification. Updating site names, addresses, or closures on the Institutional Summary Form submitted as part of reaffirmation or fifth-year interim reviews is insufficient; the institution is responsible for submitting a substantive change to maintain site records. If the institution identifies an error in a site record, the SACSCOC staff will work with the institution to resolve. (*Note:* an address change is not the same as a relocation; for additional information, see specific requirements by type of substantive change.)
14. **Marketing, advertising, recruitment, and admissions:** Substantive changes are subject to SACSCOC's *Advertising and Student Recruitment* policy. Marketing, advertising, and

recruitment may start after a prospectus is submitted and before receiving approval provided the disclaimer statement of pending approval in the *Advertising and Student Recruitment* policy is clearly included in all marketing information. Admission applications may be taken, but admission offers – including contingent offers – should not be made until the substantive change is approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

15. **Non-enumerated changes:** SACSCOC reserves the right to consider an institutional change, or a group of changes, as constituting a substantive change even if not specifically enumerated in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. SACSCOC may require an institution to submit materials related to the change(s) for review by staff and for possible review and action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. A substantive change committee visit may be authorized.
16. **Notification vs. approval:** Upon favorable review of a proposed substantive change, either
 - a. notification is accepted by staff, or
 - b. approval is granted by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

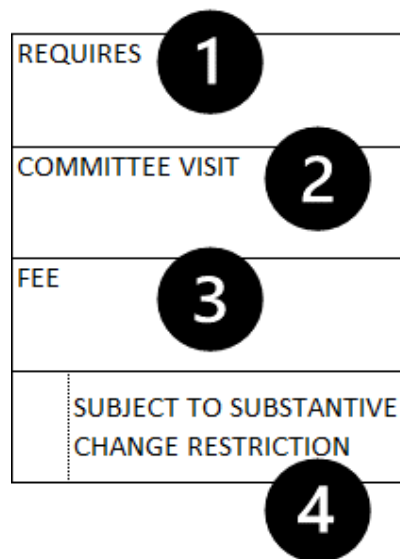
SACSCOC cannot accept notification or approve changes not identified and required in policy. Institutions should not submit changes that are not identified in policy as requiring notification or approval; no action will be taken.

17. **Possible non-compliance:** If the review of a substantive change notification, prospectus, or application suggests material non-compliance with any of the *Principles of Accreditation* or SACSCOC policies, SACSCOC reserves the right to further review. An institution may be required to submit materials related to the possible non-compliance for review by staff and for possible review and action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Further review may be warranted even if the related prospectus or application is withdrawn or if the substantive change is denied approval.
 18. **Systems:** Because SACSCOC accredits institutions and does not accredit systems, a substantive change must be submitted by an institution. Systems or state coordinating boards cannot submit a substantive change on institutions' behalf. System coordination across institutions is encouraged where practicable, yet individual institutions are ultimately responsible for their substantive change submissions.
 19. **Submission authority:** A substantive change may be submitted by the institution's chief executive office or accreditation liaison only.
 20. **Withdrawal:** An institution may withdraw a substantive change application, prospectus, or notification at any point during the review process. If a substantive change has been approved or notification accepted, it cannot be withdrawn.
-

Each substantive change type described in the procedures – for institutional changes, for program changes, and for off-campus instructional site changes – is accompanied by a graphical summary of the principal requirements:

1. The change requires either
 - Notification,
 - Approval, or
 - Notification and Approval
2. A committee visit is either
 - Required,
 - Contingent on institutional characteristics, or
 - Not required
3. A fee to review the substantive change is either
 - Yes or
 - No

(see the Fee and Expenses section of the procedure for amounts; committee visit fees and expenses are separate)
4. The type of substantive change is subject to additional or different requirements if the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION, either
 - Yes or
 - No



For each substantive change type – e.g., a new off-campus instructional site, a program closure, a new dual academic award, etc. – a

What to submit

section identifies and explains the information that must be submitted by the institution.

For a substantive change requiring

Notification, the information to submit is listed with the description and explanation of the substantive change type.

For a substantive change requiring

Approval, the information to submit is provided either in

- Appendix A (What to Submit for Approvals) by substantive change type, or
- the separate policy that covers certain types of substantive change such as a level change, a governance change, and others; these are clearly noted under *What to Submit* for these types of substantive change.



For notifications *and* approvals, attach to the submission a completed

Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).

(This cover sheet will change as new processes are implemented; ensure you have the most current version from the [SACSCOC website](#).)

Some substantive change types have more than one *What to submit* section. This is because some types of substantive change have different requirements depending on an institution's specific circumstances. Carefully read each contingency to ensure the correct information is submitted.

Substantive change webinars (live and on-demand), frequently asked questions (FAQs), workshop information, upcoming SACSCOC annual meeting and summer institute session, and other news and updates are available on the [substantive change webpage](#) on the SACSCOC website. Because this document, by design, is not frequently updated, monitor the substantive change webpage for up-to-date information, reminders, and new developments.

(End of General Requirements)

Specific Requirements by Type of Substantive Change

Institutional Changes

- [Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion](#)
- [Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval](#)
- [Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval](#)
- [Governance Change](#)
- [Institution Closure](#)
- [Institution Relocation](#)
- [Acquisition](#)
- [Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan](#)
- [Level Change](#)
- [Merger / Consolidation](#)
- [Mission Change](#)
- [Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change](#)

Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
NO	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A change in the way an institution measures students' progress to completion requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. This includes changes from or to

- semester, trimester, or quarter academic calendars;
- time-based (i.e., calendar-based) or non-time based (i.e., competency-based) measures; and
- clock hour-based or credit hour-based measures.

This substantive change addresses an *institutional-level* change across most or all of an institution's programs. However, a *program-level* change in the measure of student progress may require notification or approval: see also program-level substantive changes such as clock-credit hour conversion, method of delivery, and competency-based education programs.

A change in measure of student progress must demonstrate

- conversion equivalency from the current measure to the new measure, and
- compliance with the SACSCOC *Credit Hours* policy and the *Principles of Accreditation* Standards 9.2 (Program length), 9.7 (Program requirements), 10.1 (Academic policies), and 10.7 (Policies for awarding credit).



What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a change in measure of student progress to completion](#).

Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

In a competency-based education (CBE) program using the course/credit-based approach, demonstrating competencies is embedded in a traditional curriculum with courses completed, credits earned, and a credential awarded. Students typically enroll in an academic term and course credits are awarded at the end of the term by demonstrating mastery of the competencies associated with a course. Students may accelerate learning and demonstration of competencies. Transcripts record courses and grades, though the institution may opt to maintain a separate transcript of competencies.

An institution's *first* program in which 50% or more of the program may be earned through the course/credit-based approach to CBE requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. This approves both the program and approves the institution to offer additional course/credit-based CBE programs subject to additional approvals or notifications described below.

After the institution is approved to offer its first course/credit-based CBE program, additional programs in which 50% or more is earned through course/credit-based CBE are subject to

- new program approval if it is a significant departure from the institution's existing programs,
—OR—
- new program notification if it is not a significant departure from the institution's existing programs,
—OR—
- notification as an additional method of delivery for an existing program.

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for competency-based education by course/credit-based approach – institutional-level approval](#).

Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval

Distance education is a method of delivery in which 50% or more of instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same location. It includes synchronous (live or real-time) and asynchronous (not live or real-time) instruction.

REQUIRES	
Approval	
Exec Council of the Board	
COMMITTEE VISIT	
No	
FEE	
Yes	
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An institution's *first* program in which 50% or more of the program may be earned by distance education requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. This approves both the program and approves the institution to offer distance education programs subject to additional approvals or notifications described below.

After the institution is approved to offer its first distance education program, additional programs in which 50% or more is earned through distance education are subject to

- new program approval if it is a significant departure from the institution's existing programs,
—OR—
- new program notification if it is not a significant departure from the institution's existing programs,
—OR—
- notification as an additional method of delivery for an existing program.

 What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for distance education – institutional-level approval](#).

Governance Change

REQUIRES	Notification + Approval
Full Board of Trustees	
COMMITTEE VISIT	Required
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An institutional governance change requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. A governance change may include significantly altering governing board bylaws, the board’s scope of authority or responsibility, the number of board members, or how board members are selected. Only changing the composition of the board – i.e., replacing current board members with new members or other changes in accordance with established bylaws – does not usually constitute a governance change.

A substantive change committee visit is required and is authorized at the time of approval.

A governance change may affect the institution’s reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.

In addition to a prospectus, an institutional governance change requires notification to SACSCOC at least six months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting at which the prospectus will be reviewed.



What to submit

A notification to include:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. A description of the planned change.
3. The intended implementation date.
4. The intended SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting (June or December) and year for which the institution will submit a prospectus for review.

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.

Institution Closure

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An institution ending all instruction requires an institution closure teach-out plan subject to SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval. Unlike an institutional contingency teach-out plan – which is a *precautionary* plan – an institution closure addresses *imminent* closure or closure expected with reasonable certainty. The teach-out plan must be submitted as soon as possible after closure becomes known or expected.

The teach-out plan details the institution’s process for orderly closure with primary emphasis on assisting students complete their programs of study with minimal disruption and additional costs. Institutions may teach-out their own programs, enter into teach-out agreements with other institutions, or both. For an institution with a gradual or phased teach-out plan, the teach-out period may extend several years.

The teach-out plan must

- provide reasonable completion options for all students in all programs, independent of how near or far the students are from completion,
- explain how the institution will provide for students’ and former students’ access to academic transcripts and other verification of academic credentials,
- identify the permanent repositor or trustee of student academic and financial aid records,
- describe the process and expected timeline for the disposition of assets,
- address any other provision identified by SACSCOC staff as essential to the successful closure of the institution based on the institution’s particular situation and in the interest of the affected students and former students.



What to submit

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an institution closure](#).

Institution Relocation

REQUIRES	Approval
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An institution relocation requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. The prospectus should explain the institution’s plan and timeline, assurance of continuous operation, assurance that instruction and student support services are not materially interrupted or hindered, and assurance of adequate financial resources and planning to support the relocation and continued operation of the institution. The prospectus must demonstrate the new location maintains the institution’s compliance with Standards 13.7 (*Physical resources*) and 13.8 (*Institutional environment*). The prospectus must demonstrate the relocation will not place the institution in jeopardy of non-compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*.

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an institution relocation](#).

Acquisition

REQUIRES	Notification + Approval
COMMITTEE VISIT	Required
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Acquisition is the sale, exchange, or transfer of a component of an institution’s or entity’s assets to a SACSCOC accredited institution. Following acquisition, the participating entities remain in operation as separate institutions or entities. Acquisition includes off-campus instructional sites, for-credit educational programs, or other tangible educational assets. Acquisition excludes assets unrelated to the core mission of the SACSCOC institution such as non-educational real estate and intangible property. Acquisition is independent of financial consideration; i.e., an acquisition may or may not involve the exchange of money between participating entities. Acquisition requires SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval.

Upon acceptance or approval of the prospectus, a Substantive Change Committee visit will be authorized to review the institution's ongoing compliance with the Principles of Accreditation following implementation of the acquisition. The implementation or effective date must occur within 30 days of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval of the acquisition. Acquisition normally does not affect the acquiring institution's reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.

In addition to a prospectus, an acquisition requires notification to SACSCOC at least six months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting at which the prospectus will be reviewed.



What to submit

A notification to include:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. A description of the planned change.
3. The intended implementation date.
4. The intended SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting (June or December) and year for which the institution will submit a prospectus for review.

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.

Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An institutional contingency teach-out plan must be approved if any of the following occur:

- a. the institution is placed or continued on probation or probation for good cause by SACSCOC,
- b. SACSCOC acts to end the institution’s accreditation,
- c. the institution is on provisional certification for federal financial aid by U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and the institution has been directed by USDE to submit a teach-out plan as a condition of participation,
- d. the institution is on reimbursement for federal financial aid by USDE,
- e. the institution is on heightened cash monitoring for federal financial aid by USDE,
- f. the institution is the subject of USDE emergency action or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in federal financial aid, *or*
- g. the institution’s state authorization is revoked.

A contingency teach-out plan is created in due diligence as a precaution rather than as an imminent closure plan. Should closure become necessary, the contingency teach-out plan becomes the institution closure plan, subject to revisions as warranted. The objective of a contingency teach-out plan is assurance of adequate institutional planning and SACSCOC

concurrence for the benefit of students, faculty, and staff well in advance of immediate need. The contingency teach-out plan must detail, for each institutional program, how the institution will provide options for students to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption and additional costs, including identification of comparable programs and institutions. Teach-out agreements may be included.

What to submit

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an institutional contingency teach-out plan](#).

Level Change

REQUIRES	
Approval	
Full Board of Trustees	
COMMITTEE VISIT	
Required	
FEE	
Yes	
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Initiating coursework or a program – including a certificate, diploma, degree, or other generally recognized credit-bearing program – at a different level than previously approved or authorized by SACSCOC requires a level change application and SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

SACSCOC classifies institutions according to the highest degree level offered by the institution. The classifications are:

Level	Highest degree offered
I	Associate
II	Baccalaureate
III	Master’s
IV	Master’s and specialist
V	Three or fewer doctorates
VI	Four or more doctorates

Refer to the [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, application, and submission deadlines.

The highest degree level offered by the institution does not automatically include authorization of the institution to offer coursework or program at all lower levels; i.e., the institution’s highest degree level is not inclusive of authority to offer courses or programs at all lower degree levels. For example, a Level V institution is not automatically authorized to offer undergraduate coursework or programs; a Level II institution is not automatically authorized to offer the associate degree. Authorization to offer coursework or programs at a given level is explicitly approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

An institution unsure of its coursework or program level authorizations should contact its SACSCOC staff representative; this information is publicly disclosed for all institutions on the SACSCOC website.

Committee Visit

A substantive change committee visit is required for a level change and is authorized at the time of approval except for those noted under the exceptions section herein.

Additional Program at the Newly Approved Level

Following the approval of a level change by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, the institution may not initiate an additional program(s) at the newly approved level until after the SACSCOC Board of Trustees takes positive action on the institution’s continued accreditation following review of the report of the substantive change committee visit authorized at the time of approval.

What to submit

A level change application: Submit a level change application using the outline provided in [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF].

Exceptions:

Embedded associate degree

...that is not a significant departure: A baccalaureate degree granting institution may combine already-offered lower division coursework into an associate degree program. This does not constitute a significant departure because the institution already offers the courses comprising the new degree program. In this case, a level change application is still required to authorize the institution to offer the associate degree; however, the application may be reviewed by SACSCOC staff and referred to the Executive Committee of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for action.

REQUIRES	
Approval	
Exec Council of the Board	
COMMITTEE VISIT	
No	
FEE	
Yes	
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

What to submit

A level change application: Submit a level change application for an embedded associate degree that is not a significant departure using the outline provided in [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF].

...that is a significant departure: A baccalaureate degree granting institution seeking authorization to offer an associate degree program with course coursework significantly different from current lower-division coursework – i.e., a significant departure – must submit a level change application to be reviewed for action by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees at a regularly scheduled biannual meeting, usually in June and December.

REQUIRES	
Approval	
Full Board of Trustees	
COMMITTEE VISIT	
No	
FEE	
Yes	
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

What to submit

A level change application: Submit a level change application for an embedded associate degree that is a significant departure using the outline provided in [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF].

For either type of level change for an embedded associate degree program, a substantive change committee visit is normally not authorized but is at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

Embedded Specialist degree:

Although rare, an institution already approved for a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree program might not have concurrently sought approval to offer the Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree program. If an institution with an approved Ed.D. program subsequently chooses to combine existing graduate-level coursework already being offered as part of an Ed.D. program into a separate and coherent Ed.S. program curriculum, review of a level change application to authorize awarding the Ed.S. degree may be reviewed by SACSCOC staff and referred to the Executive Committee of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for action. A substantive change committee visit is normally not authorized but is at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

REQUIRES	
Approval	
Exec Council of the Board	
COMMITTEE VISIT	
No	
FEE	
Yes	
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

What to submit

A level change application: Submit a level change application for an embedded specialist degree using the outline provided in [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF].

Level V to Level VI:

An institution moving from Level V to Level VI does not require a level change application or level change approval. An institution moves from Level V to Level VI concurrent with, and consequent to, implementation of the institution's fourth doctoral degree program.

While the fourth doctorate is subject to approval as a new program as a significant departure from existing programs, a level change application to move from Level V to Level VI is not required. The institution should request reclassification to Level VI after the fourth doctoral program enrolls its first students. A substantive change committee visit is normally not authorized when moving from Level V to Level VI, but a visit is at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

What to submit

A letter to the SACSCOC president: Submit a letter to the president of SACSCOC to include for the fourth doctoral program

- the program’s name and intended implementation date,
- certification that the first students have enrolled in the program,
- evidence the program was approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees
— OR —
an explanation of how the institution determined the program was not a significant departure and thus did not require SACSCOC approval, and
- a request to reclassify to a Level VI institution.
- A Substantive Change Cover Sheet is not necessary for this notification.

Merger / Consolidation

REQUIRES	Notification + Approval
	Full Board of Trustees
COMMITTEE VISIT	Required
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Merger/consolidation is the sale, exchange, or transfer of all assets of at least one institution or entity to a SACSCOC accredited institution. Following a merger/consolidation, only one institution remains in operation as a separate institution or entity. Merger/consolidation is independent of financial consideration; i.e., a merger/consolidation may or may not involve the exchange of money between participating entities. A Substantive Change Committee visit is required and is authorized upon acceptance or approval of the prospectus. The Committee will review the institution's ongoing compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* following implementation of the merger/consolidation. The implementation or effective date must occur within 30 days of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval of the merger/consolidation. A merger/consolidation usually affects the resulting institution's reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.

In addition to a prospectus, a merger/consolidation requires notification to SACSCOC at least six months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting at which the prospectus will be reviewed.

What to submit

A notification to include:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. A description of the planned change.
3. The intended implementation date.
4. The intended SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting (June or December) and year for which the institution will submit a prospectus for review.

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.

Mission Change

REQUIRES	Approval
	Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A significant change in the established mission of an institution requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. A mission change fundamentally alters the character of an institution and its portfolio of academic programs or other mission-driven activities.

- An editorial change or re-wording of a mission statement that does not reflect a material change in mission is not a substantive change. This type of change does not require approval and should not be reported to SACSCOC.
- A mission change may be implicitly embedded or concurrent with other another type of substantive change requiring SACSCOC approval. Examples are a level change, a merger/consolidation, or establishing a program or portfolio of programs that changes the distinctiveness of an institution. This type of mission change typically does not require separate review and approval but should be clear in the prospectus or application for the other type of substantive change.

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a mission change](#).

Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change

REQUIRES	Notification + Approval
	Full Board of Trustees
COMMITTEE VISIT	Required
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An institutional change of ownership, change of institutional means of control, or change of institutional legal status requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

A substantive change committee visit is required and is authorized at the time of approval.

A change of ownership normally affects the institution's reaffirmation cycle. A change of the means of control or change of legal status may affect the institution's reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.

In addition to a prospectus, a change of ownership, means of control, or legal status requires notification to SACSCOC at least six months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting at which the prospectus will be reviewed.



What to submit

A notification to include:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. A description of the planned change.
3. The intended implementation date.
4. The intended SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting (June or December) and year for which the institution will submit a prospectus for review.

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.

(End of Institutional Changes)

Program Changes

- [Clock-Credit Hour Conversion](#)
- [Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval](#)
- [Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Notification](#)
- [Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines](#)
- [Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities](#)
- [Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval](#)
- [Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification](#)
- [Correspondence Education](#)
- [Dual Academic Award](#)
- [Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution\(s\) or Entity\(ies\)](#)
- [Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution\(s\)](#)
- [Method of Delivery – Approval](#)
- [Method of Delivery – Notification](#)
- [New Program – Approval](#)
- [New Program – Notification](#)
- [Program Closure](#)
- [Program Designed for Prior Learning – Approval](#)
- [Program Designed for Prior Learning – Notification](#)
- [Program Length Change](#)
- [Program Re-open](#)

Clock-Credit Hour Conversion

REQUIRES Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT No
FEE No
No SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Changing a *program's* progress to completion measure from clock hours to credit hours – or from credit hours to clock hours – requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

Changing an *institution's* progress to completion is an institutional-level substantive change. For additional information, refer to Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion in this policy.

A conversion must be based on a sound academic rationale and an objective conversion formula demonstrating parity between the current and proposed measures. A conversion must demonstrate no negative impact on student learning outcomes or students' expected

time to completion, and must demonstrate compliance with SACSCOC standards and policies and the institution’s policies.

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a clock-credit hour conversion](#).

Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval

(See also Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Notification, Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based – Approval (institutional level change), and Method of Delivery - Notification.)

REQUIRES	Approval
COMMITTEE VISIT	Full Board of Trustees
FEE	Required
	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A program in which 50% or more of the program may be earned through the direct assessment approach to competency-based education (CBE) requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. *Each* direct assessment CBE program requires SACSCOC approval, independent of prior direct assessment program approvals for the institution. A new direct assessment program is subject to determination of significant departure and, as warranted, approved as a new program concurrent with the direct assessment approval prior to implementation. Approval by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees is required. See also [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) policy [PDF].

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) [PDF] policy.

Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Notification

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A program in which 25-49% of the program may be earned through the direct-assessment approach to competency-based education (CBE) requires SACSCOC notification prior to implementation. A new direct assessment program is subject to determination of significant departure and, as warranted, approved as a new program concurrent with the direct assessment notification prior to implementation. See also [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) policy.



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The name of the program.
3. The credential of the program (e.g., associate of applied science, certificate, etc.).
4. The instructional level of the program (undergraduate or graduate if not apparent from the credential).
5. An affirmative statement that at least 25% but no more than 50% of the program may be earned through the direct assessment approach to CBE.
6. The intended implementation date.

Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines

There are three types of substantive change cooperative academic arrangements:

1. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities
2. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval
3. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification

The institution's approval and notification obligations are described below by type. The institution determines if an entity is a title IV entity or a non-title IV entity for the purposes of substantive change. Refer to the [definition of a program](#) in the Glossary.

Definitions

For substantive change purposes only –

A title IV entity

- is certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs
—OR—
- is an administrative organization or unit that administers or coordinates academic programs across multiple educational institutions or providers
 - —AND— does not provide or is not involved in aspects of educational instruction
 - —AND— all educational institutions or providers participating in the administrative organization are certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs.

A non-title IV entity

- is not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs
—OR—
- is an administrative organization or unit that administers or coordinates academic programs across multiple educational institutions or providers
 - —AND— does provide or is involved in aspects of educational instruction
 - —AND— one or more educational institutions or providers participating in the administrative organization is not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs.

Guidelines

An administrative organization or unit as used in these definitions include, as examples,

- a department within a state higher education coordinating board,
- a unit under the direction of an institutional system's central office,
- a coalition of colleges sharing access to its members' existing instructional resources,
- and others.

Determination examples

1. The entity is an educational institution certified to participate in title IV programs. For substantive change purposes, this is a title IV entity.
2. The entity is not certified for title IV but is an administrative unit of a state college system's governing board, the entity provides no instruction, and every college participating in the administrative unit is certified to participate in title IV programs. For substantive change purposes, this is a title IV entity.
3. The entity is not certified for title IV but is an administrative unit of a state's higher education coordinating board, the entity provides no instruction, and all but one college participating in the entity is certified to participate in title IV programs. For substantive change purposes, this is a non-title IV entity.
4. The entity is not certified for title IV but is a unit under the control of a university system's central office, the entity has hired some of the instructors providing instruction under the agreement, and every college participating in the entity is certified to participate in title IV programs: For substantive change purposes, this is a non-title IV entity.

Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities

(See also *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines*.)

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An agreement with a title IV entity (or entities) to deliver program content with credit being recorded on the SACSCOC institution's transcript as its own requires notification prior to implementation if

- 50% or more of a program is offered through the arrangement

— OR —

- the SACSCOC institution could not deliver the program without the arrangement, i.e., it is dependent on the arrangement

to deliver a program.

Unless at least one of the above criteria is met and the institution transcribes the credit as its own, the arrangement with a title IV entity is not a substantive change requiring notification and nothing should be submitted to SACSCOC. If either criterion is met, notification is required and must include a copy of an agreement signed by the institution and the Title IV entity. Examples of a cooperative academic arrangement include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, and contractual instruction. Also refer to Standard 10.9 (Cooperative academic arrangements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. An affirmative statement that the institution will record credits under the arrangement (or other measures of completion) on its academic transcripts as awarded by the institution.
3. Demonstrate the institution's determination that the entity or entities in the agreement are title IV entities for the purpose of substantive change as provided in the *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines* section of this policy.
4. An explanation of which condition(s) defined above are met that require the arrangement to be submitted as notification.
5. The program(s) for which credits earned under the arrangement will apply.
6. A copy of a signed and dated memorandum of agreement or other document explaining the scope and responsibilities of each partnering institution or entity.
7. The intended implementation date.

Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

(See also *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines.*)

REQUIRES	Approval
Exec Council of the Board	
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An agreement with an entity (or entities) not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs to deliver 25-50% of a program's content recorded on the SACSCOC institution's transcript as its own requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. A prospectus must include the program(s) involved, names and contact information of the principal responsible parties at the institution and participating entity (or entities), and a copy of a signed agreement with the entity (or entities). SACSCOC is obligated to respond within 90 days of receipt of the notification. Also refer to Standard 10.9 of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION entering into a cooperative academic arrangement with a non-title IV certified entity offering up to 50% of a program requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation (see also Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification).



What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval](#).

Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

(See also *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines.*)

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An agreement with an entity (or entities) not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs to deliver less than 25% of a program's content recorded on the SACSCOC institution's transcript as its own requires notification prior to implementation. SACSCOC is obligated to respond within 90 days of receipt of the notification. Also refer to Standard 10.9 of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION entering into a cooperative academic arrangement with a non-title IV certified entity requires SACSCOC approval

prior to implementation; notification is not an option (see also Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval).



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. An affirmative statement that the institution will record credits under the arrangement (or other measures of completion) on its academic transcripts as awarded by the institution.
3. The name and credential of each program to which credits earned under the arrangement will apply.
4. The maximum percentage of the total program requirements that will be earned under the agreement; identify this for each program for which credits earned under the arrangement will apply.
5. Demonstrate the institution's determination that the entity or entities in the agreement are non-title IV entities for the purpose of substantive change as provided in the *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines* section of this policy.
6. A statement of the institution's intent for students enrolled in the program(s) covered under the agreement to be eligible to receive title IV federal financial aid including the portion of each program or programs that will be eligible.
 - a. If the intent is for students to receive title IV aid,
 - i. demonstrate the institution has assessed and reached a good-faith conclusion of the program(s) title IV eligibility under the terms of the agreement, and
 - ii. if any portion of any program or programs will not be eligible for title IV aid, demonstrate the institution's plan to communicate this information to the affected students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.
 - b. If the intent is students will not receive title IV aid, demonstrate the institution's plan to communicate this information to the affected students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.
7. A copy of a signed and dated memorandum of agreement or other document explaining the scope and responsibilities of each partnering institution or entity.
8. The names and contact information of the principal parties at the institution and at each participating entity (or entities); this may be included in the memorandum of agreement.
9. Provisions for the regular review of the agreement, including renewal and termination of the agreement; this may be included in the memorandum of agreement.
10. The intended implementation date.

Correspondence Education

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Correspondence education is a learning process in which the institution provides instructional materials and examination, by mail or electronic transmission, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Courses are typically self-paced at the student's discretion.

Distance education requirements equally apply to correspondence education. Please refer to the distance education notification and approval requirements in this document and to the [Distance and Correspondence Education](#) policy [PDF].



What to submit

Refer to the distance education notification and approval requirements.

Dual Academic Award

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An arrangement in which a student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to each institution granting academic awards at the same credential level.

A dual academic award requires notification prior to implementation. A dual academic award is an arrangement in which a student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to each institution granting academic awards at the same credential level. The award granted by each institution bears only its name.

A new program offered as part of a dual academic award is subject to determination of the percentage of new content and, as warranted, notification or approval as described in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

For additional information, refer to the [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) policy [PDF].

The following do not qualify as dual academic awards and thus do not require notification, but institutions are free to implement these arrangements consistent with the *Principles of Accreditation* and other policies:

- completion or pathway options *across* credential levels (e.g., a pathway leading to the award of a baccalaureate degree and a master's degree),
- agreements that address transfer articulation only, and

- agreements for individual students such as cotutelle arrangements that do not meet dual academic award criteria.

(See also joint academic award.)



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. The name of each participating institution.
3. The program name (to indicate the discipline) and credential (e.g., Certificate of Credit, Master of Business Administration, etc.) to be awarded by each participating institution.
4. The instructional level of the academic awards (undergraduate or graduate, if not obvious by the credential to be awarded).
5. A copy of a signed and dated memorandum of agreement between or amongst all participating institutions to include terms, scope, and responsibilities of each institution.
6. The names and contact information of the principal parties at each institution; this may be included in the memorandum of agreement.
7. A statement affirming the academic award granted by the SACSCOC accredited institution complies with Standard 9.4 (*institutional credits for an undergraduate degree*) or Standard 9.5 (*institutional credits for a graduate/professional degree*).
8. The intended implementation date.

Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)

REQUIRES	Approval
	Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions, where at least one is a non-SACSCOC institution or entity, in prescribed curricula leading to the institutions granting a single academic award bearing the names, seals, and officials’ signatures of each participating institution. For additional information, refer to the [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) policy [\[PDF\]](#).



What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for joint academic award with non-SACSCOC institution\(s\) or entity\(ies\)](#).

Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution(s)

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A joint academic award is one in which a student receives instruction at two or more institutions in a prescribed curriculum leading to the institutions granting a single academic award bearing the names, seals, and officials' signatures of each participating institution. For additional information, refer to the [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) policy [PDF].

A joint academic award in which all institutions are SACSCOC accredited requires notification prior to implementation. Each participating institution must submit notification. (If at least one institution is not accredited by SACSCOC, approval is required; see also Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies).)



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [PDF].
2. A copy of a signed and dated agreement between or amongst all participating institution.
3. The name of the program (to clearly indicate the discipline).
4. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Graduate Certificate, Doctor of Philosophy, etc.).
5. The instructional level of the program – undergraduate or graduate – if not obvious from the credential.
6. Name and contact information for the primary responsible party at each institution
7. The intended implementation date.

Method of Delivery – Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

REQUIRES	Approval
Exec Council of the Board	
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Adding a method of instructional delivery to an existing program requires approval prior to implementation only for an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

An institution not on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION is not required to seek approval to add a method of delivery to a program but is required to provide notification (see Method of Delivery – Notification).

A specific method of delivery applies when 50% or more of a program is delivered by that method. A program may be delivered 50% or more by more than one method (students may have the option to choose from different methods of delivery for the same program, e.g., predominately face-to-face versus predominately distance education).

The three methods of delivery are

- competency-based education,
- distance education, and
- face-to-face instruction.



What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for method of delivery – approval](#).

Method of Delivery – Notification

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Adding a method of instructional delivery to an existing program requires notification prior to implementation.

A specific method of delivery applies when 50% or more of a program is delivered by that method. A program may be delivered 50% or more by more than one method (students may have the option to choose from different methods of delivery for the same program, e.g., predominately face-to-face versus predominately distance education).

The three methods of delivery are

- competency-based education,
- distance education, and
- face-to-face instruction.

For example, adding a distance education delivery to an existing program delivered face-to-face requires notification.

Adding some methods of delivery may require approval as a separate type of substantive change:

- Adding a direct assessment competency-based education delivery of a program requires SACSCOC approval if 50% or more of the program can be earned by direct assessment
- Adding a course/credit-based competency-based education delivery of a program requires SACSCOC approval if 50% or more of the program can be earned by course/credit-based competency-based education *and* if the institution has not been previously approved to offer 50% or more of a program by course/credit-based competency-based education.
- Adding a distance education delivery of a program requires SACSCOC approval if 50% or more of the program can be earned by distance education *and* if the

institution has not been previously approved to offer 50% or more of a program by distance education.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION adding a method of instructional delivery to an existing program requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation; notification is not an option (see also Method of Delivery–Approval).

What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The name of the program (to indicate the discipline).
3. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Associate of Arts, Master of Accounting).
4. The instructional level (undergraduate or graduate, if not obvious from the credential).
5. The method of delivery to be added: competency-based education, distance education, or face-to-face instruction.
6. The intended implementation date.

New Program – Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A new program with 50-100% new content is a significant departure from the institution’s existing programs and requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

For an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION, a new program with 25-100% new content is a significant departure from the institution’s existing programs and requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

- Content is new if it is not currently offered by the institution at the new program’s instructional level (associate, baccalaureate, master’s, education specialist, or doctoral).
- A determination of the percentage of new content is made by the institution, not SACSCOC.
- New program approval equally applies to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
- If the institution is not currently approved to offer courses or programs at the new program’s instructional level, a level change approval is required (e.g., the institution’s first courses or programs at the baccalaureate degree level).
- Increasing the level of a program, i.e., offering a new program in a discipline at a higher instructional level than a currently offered program, is by definition a significant departure. For example, if an institution offers a baccalaureate degree program in a discipline and begins a new program in the same discipline at the

master’s degree level, then the new program is a significant departure and requires approval prior to implementation. This applies across all instructional levels.

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for new program approval](#).

New Program – Notification

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

REQUIRES
Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT
No
FEE
No
Yes SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A new program with 25-49% new content is a significant departure from the institution’s existing programs and requires notification prior to implementation.

For an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION, a new program with 25-49% new content is a significant departure from the institution’s existing programs and requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation (see also New Program – Approval).

- Content is new if it is not currently offered by the institution at the new program’s instructional level (associate, baccalaureate, master’s, education specialist, or doctoral).
- A determination of the percentage of new content is made by the institution, not SACSCOC.
- New program notification equally applies to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
- If the institution is not currently approved to offer courses or programs at the new program’s instructional level, a level change approval is required (e.g., the institution’s first courses or programs at the baccalaureate degree level).

What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. The name of the program (to indicate the discipline).
3. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Associate of Applied Science, Bachelor of Music, Master of Science, etc.).
4. The instructional level (undergraduate or graduate, if not obvious from the credential).
5. The method(s) of delivery: competency-based education, distance education, or face-to-face instruction.
6. The intended implementation date.

Program Closure

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Closing a program requires SACSCOC approval. Approval requires a teach-out plan.

Closure is defined as closed to admission or entry, not the cessation of instruction; i.e., closure date is when students can no longer start, not the date instruction ends. Closure approval ensures the institution has a plan and process to provide students reasonable completion options that minimize disruption and additional costs. Because closure approval is approval of the teach-out process, not the closure per se (i.e., not after the fact), a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close.

Program closure includes ending a program at all locations or by all methods of delivery, but also includes ending a student’s completion option at a specific location or by a specific method of delivery. Therefore, program closure approval is required if a program closes

- at a location (on-campus or off-campus instructional site) but continues to be offered at other locations, or
- by a method of delivery but continues to be offered by other methods of delivery.

Program closure is not required for a specialization embedded *within* a discipline-specific program. Depending on an institution’s terminology, a specialization within a program may be called a minor, concentration, cognate, or other similar term.

Because time is of the essence – to provide students maximum time to consider and adapt to alternate completion plans – an institution may generally begin a program teach-out plan after it has been submitted to SACSCOC for approval. This assumes the institution completes a teach-out plan with all due care to address the requirements explained here and in the teach-out plan requirements in Appendix A. If upon review by SACSCOC the teach-out plan is incomplete or inadequate, the teach-out plan may be deferred pending additional information, explanation, or an acceptable revised teach-out plan is provided to SACSCOC. Although the institution may begin a teach-out immediately after submitting it, the closure is not approved until action is taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Starting and completing a teach-out plan before securing SACSCOC Board approval does not relieve the institution of its obligation to provide an acceptable teach-out plan.

What to submit

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a program closure](#).

Program Designed for Prior Learning – Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

This requirement applies only to institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION; refer to the SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION section for more information.

Initiating a program requiring students to possess prior learning as a condition of admission requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation only for institutions currently on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION. For all other institutions, notification is required but approval is not.

Standard 10.7 (*Policies for awarding credit*) of the *Principles of Accreditation* applies without exception to programs designed for prior learning. A new program designed for prior learning is subject to notification or approval as a new program as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.



What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a program designed for prior learning](#).

Program Designed for Prior Learning – Notification

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Initiating a program requiring students to possess prior learning as a condition of admission requires notification prior to implementation.

Standard 10.7 (*Policies for awarding credit*) of the *Principles of Accreditation* applies without exception to programs designed for prior learning. A new program designed for prior learning is subject to notification or approval as a new program as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION initiating a program requiring students to possess prior learning as a condition of admission requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation; notification is not an option (see also Program Designed for Prior Learning – Approval).

**What to submit**

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The name of the program (to include the program's discipline).
3. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Bachelor of Applied Science, Master of Professional Studies, etc.).
4. The program's instructional level (undergraduate or graduate, if not obvious from the credential).
5. A description of the prior learning required as a condition of admission.
6. A description of how the institution
 - a. will assess prior learning,
 - b. award credit, if applicable, for prior learning,
 - c. establish the validity of its prior learning assessment,
 - d. how faculty are involved in the assessment of prior learning,
 - e. how the faculty involved in the assessment of prior learning are qualified in the disciplines in which credit for prior learning is awarded, and
 - f. how the institution, with faculty involvement, periodically assesses third parties on which it relies for prior learning assessment, if applicable.
7. The intended implementation date.

Program Length Change

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

REQUIRES	Approval
	Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A change in program length – for either an increase or a decrease – requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation if

- program credit hours (or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies) increase or decrease by 25% or more
- AND —
- students' expected time to completion increases or decreases by more than one term or its equivalent or comparable measure.

This requirement equally applies to degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credentials.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation if program credit hours (or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies) increase or decrease by 25% or more, regardless of whether or not the students' expected time to completion changes. That is, the second criterion above does not apply to institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

- A change in program length if program credit hours – or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies – increase or decrease by 25% or more (versus the same percentage plus the additional criterion of changing expected time to complete by one term or more for institutions not on restriction),

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a program length change](#).

Program Re-open

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

A closed program may re-open within five years of the closure date by submitting notification. The closure date is the date the program was closed to admission, not necessarily the date of last instruction or the date SACSCOC approved the closure. If more than five years have elapsed, the program is subject to new program notification or approval.

What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The name of the program (to include its discipline).
3. The credential of the program (e.g., Diploma, Master of Education, etc.).
4. The instructional level of the program (if not obvious from the credential).
5. The closure date (date of last admission) of the program as submitted to SACSCOC for closure approval.
6. The date SACSCOC approved the closure.
7. The case identification (Case ID) from the SACSCOC closure approval letter or, if there is no Case ID, a copy of the SACSCOC approval letter.
8. A statement of assurance that the institution has adequate instructional space and equipment, financial resources, library and learning/information resources, student support services appropriate to the programs, and faculty members qualified in the programs discipline to support the re-opening of the program.
9. The intended implementation date, i.e., the date new students will matriculate.

(End of Program Changes)

Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes

- [Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines](#)
 - [Off-campus Instructional Site Notification](#)
 - [Off-campus Instructional Site Approval](#) (including branch campus)
 - [Extensive Review](#)
 - [Limited Review](#)
 - [Committee Visits](#)
 - [Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation](#)
 - [Non-branch Campus](#)
 - [Branch Campus](#)
 - [Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change](#)
 - [Off-campus Instructional Site Closure](#)
 - [Off-campus Instructional Site Re-open](#)
-

Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines

Definitions

- Off-campus instructional site: A location
 - geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus and
 - where instruction is delivered.
- Branch campus: A special form of off-campus instructional site
 - that is geographically apart from an institution's main campus,
 - where instruction is delivered, and
 - is independent of the main campus of an institution. An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it
 - is permanent;
 - offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential;
 - has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
 - has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
- Program: For the purpose of an off-campus instructional site, a for-credit credential for which an institution awards a degree, diploma, certificate, or other credential at any level of instruction (graduate or undergraduate).

- Percentage of program instruction: The percentage of the *total* instruction required to earn a credential measured in credit hours, clock hours, competencies, or other generally accepted measure of progress to completion.

Guidelines

- Off-campus instructional site requirements apply without exception to dual enrollment sites.
- If instruction is delivered to a location by distance education (synchronously or asynchronously)
— AND —
if a student is required to be at the location to receive instruction, then the location is considered an off-campus instructional site.
- A clinical training site at which no didactic instruction is delivered is *not* an off-campus instructional site.
- A location at which no instruction is delivered to students is not an off-campus instructional site, e.g., a distance education video studio (with no students physically present), an off-campus student services complex, or administrative offices.
- Site names must be unique for an institution; an institution cannot have multiples sites with identical names. Check the SACSCOC website or institutional portal to verify before submitting.
- Site addresses must be unique for an institution; an institution cannot have multiple sites with identical addresses. Check the SACSCOC website or institutional portal to verify before submitting.



Off-campus Instructional Site Notification

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An off-campus instructional site at which 25-49% of a program’s instruction is delivered requires notification prior to implementation.

Instruction at a site may cross the 25% notification threshold any time after the institution submits notification; the institution does not have to wait for a SACSCOC response to implement (note this applies to site notification only, not to site approval).



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution's existing site).
3. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers).
4. The intended implementation date.

Off-campus Instructional Site Approval

(including branch campus)

An off-campus instructional site at which 50% or more of a program's instruction is delivered requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

An off-campus instructional site may qualify as a branch campus; refer to the federally defined branch campus criteria at the beginning of this section. Before submitting a prospectus for approval of branch campus, ensure – and demonstrate in the prospectus – *all* branch campus criteria are met. A site name may not include “branch” or “branch campus” unless approved as a branch campus as defined in policy.

There are two site approval pathways:

- approval by extensive review, and
- approval by limited review.

The pathway available to an institution depends on

- the number of sites previously approved by extensive review, and
- the status of an institution at the time a site prospectus is submitted to SACSCOC.

Extensive Review

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Approval of an off-campus instructional site by extensive review is required if the institution does not have **two or more** sites approved under the extensive review criteria and process at the time a site prospectus is submitted to SACSCOC.

An extensive review has two components:

- an institutional-level review, and
- a site-specific review.



The purpose of the institutional-level review is to ensure institutional capacity to offer courses away from its main campus and to ensure quality across locations. Institutional capacity considers

- adequacy of faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support services at sites;
- sufficient fiscal and administrative capacity to add additional sites;
- clear academic control of sites;
- regular evaluation of all sites;
- financial stability of the institution;
- engagement in long-range planning for expansion;
- and other factors.

The site-specific review considers

- physical resources including specialized equipment or materials at a site,
- qualifications of faculty at the site,
- adequate financial resources and financial planning for the site,
- adequacy of library and learning/information resource available to students at the site, adequacy of student support services available to student at the site,
- and other factors.

After an institution has two or more sites approved by extensive review, additional sites may be approved by limited review.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION must have a new site approved by extensive review; the limited review pathway is not an option.

There are two extensive review approval methods:

- **Approval method one** – Approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees based on a prospectus review: The institution prepares and submits an off-campus instructional site by extensive review prospectus. The prospectus, in part, addresses the requirements listed above; refer to Appendix A of this document for guidance and requirements. An extensive review prospectus is reviewed by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees at a regularly scheduled biannual meeting, usually in June and December. Submission due dates are published in this policy and on the SACSCOC website.

REQUIRES	Approval
	Full Board of Trustees
COMMITTEE VISIT	Contingent
FEE	Yes
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

☑ *What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for off-campus instructional site approval by extensive review](#).

- **Approval method two** – Approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees based on inclusion and review at reaffirmation: An existing, approved site(s) that was (a) included as an approved site on the Institutional Summary Form submitted as part of the institution’s on-site reaffirmation review and (b) reviewed by the on-site reaffirmation committee to include the site- and institutional-level extensive review requirements, will be considered approved by extensive review after the SACSCOC Board of Trustees takes positive action on the institution’s reaffirmation. Approval method two applies to institutions reaffirmed in 2020 or afterwards.

REQUIRES
No action by the institution

Sites approved before the extensive review requirement was included in policy in 2020 are not deemed approved by extensive review except as provided by approval method two described above.

Limited Review

Subject to **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION**

Approval of an off-campus instructional site by limited review requires a review of the proposed site via a prospectus. Approval by limited review is available if *each* of the following criteria is met at the time a site prospectus is submitted to SACSCOC:

- the institution has two or more sites approved by extensive review as defined herein;
- the institution has successfully completed at least one reaffirmation of accreditation;
- the institution is not on **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION** as defined herein.

REQUIRES
Approval
Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT
Contingent
FEE
Yes
Yes SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Approval by limited review requires approval by the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Approval by the Executive Council occurs year-round. The prospectus submission due date depends on the planned implementation date; due dates are published in this policy and on the SACSCOC website.

An institution on **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION** does not have the option of a limited review: all off-campus instructional site approvals are through the extensive review pathway only.

**What to submit**

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for off-campus instructional site approval by limited review](#).

Off-campus Instructional Site Committee Visits

A substantive change committee visit is required if *any* of the following criteria is met at the time an off-campus instructional site is approved:

- the site is a branch campus;
- the institution has less than three already-approved off-campus instructional sites — i.e., the institution’s first three approved sites each require a visit;
- the institution has not successfully completed at least one decennial reaffirmation of accreditation;
- the institution is on sanction (Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause);
or
- the institution has not, in the professional judgment of SACSCOC staff, demonstrated effective oversight of off-campus instructional sites or if there is reason to believe the institution may not be able to meet all SACSCOC requirements at the new off-campus instructional site.

A visit, if required, is authorized by the Board of Trustees at the time of approval. The SACSCOC President is also authorized to appoint a substantive change committee.

If a committee is authorized to visit an additional location, the committee is required to determine compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, including verification of personnel, facilities, and resources as asserted by the institution in its application for the additional site.

Exception. An off-campus instructional site approved by the extensive review approval method two, as defined herein, is not subject to a substantive change committee visit; the site would have been subject to review as part of the institution’s reaffirmation of accreditation.

Refer to the committee visits section of this policy for additional information, including additional considerations for visits to international off-campus instructional sites.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation

Definition: Moving instruction to a new location geographically separate from – i.e., non-contiguous to – the current location.

Note: If instruction is not moving but the name or physical address only of a site will change (e.g., renaming a street, changing the ZIP code, or re-branding the site), see Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change.

Guidelines and requirements:

- The new location must serve the same geographic area or the same pool of students. Otherwise, the current location must be closed (requires a teach-out plan and closure approval) and the new location subject to notification or approval.
- Instruction cannot overlap at the current location and the new location. All instruction must end at the current location no later than the beginning of instruction at the new location. If concurrent instruction is unavoidable, the current location is subject to closure approval and the new location is subject to notification or approval.
- A site relocation applies to relocating a single current location to a single new location; a current location cannot relocate to multiple other locations. If the institution is moving instruction from one location to multiple other locations, it may relocate the current location to one new location, and all additional new locations are subject to notification or approval as new off-campus instructional sites. A relocation results in no net change in the number of off-campus instructional sites of the institution.
- If the new location is an existing off-campus instructional site for the institution, moving instruction is not a site relocation: it is a closure of the current location (requires a teach-out plan and closure approval).
- An unavoidable and unforeseeable relocation may be eligible for emergency relocation. Refer to the [Emergency Temporary Relocation of Instruction](#) policy [PDF] for guidance. Emergency relocation is available for instruction at off-campus instructional sites and the institution's main campus.
- If relocating multiple sites, submit each relocation separately.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation – Non-branch Campus

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Relocating an off-campus instructional site that is not a branch campus requires notification prior to implementation. This equally applies to notified sites and to approved sites.



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The name and address of the site at its current location. The name and address must match the name and address on record with SACSCOC. The name and addresses on record can be verified via the institutional portal or via the institutional information available to the public on the SACSCOC website.
3. The name and address of the site at its new location.
4. The intended implementation date, i.e., the effective date of the move.
5. A statement stipulating there will be no overlap of instruction at the two locations.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation – Branch Campus

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Relocating an off-campus instructional site that is a branch campus requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. A prospectus is required.



What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for off-campus instructional site relocation of a branch campus](#).

Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Changing the name or address of an off-campus instructional site requires notification prior to implementation.

Name change: A site name should be unique to the institution (i.e., no duplicate site names). The site name can include “branch” or “branch campus” only if the site has been approved as a branch campus and is on record with SACSCOC as approved as a branch campus. The name of a site should not suggest to students, prospective students, or the public that the site is a separate institution.

Address change: If the location at which instruction is delivered *is not changing* but the address of the location is changing, then a change of address is necessary. Examples are renaming a street or road, adding a qualifier to a street name, changing a suite or room number, and changing a ZIP code. If the location at which instruction is delivered *is changing*, then that is an off-campus instructional site relocation, not an address change, and is addressed elsewhere in policy.

If the address of a site changes but there is no change to where instruction is delivered, an address change notification is appropriate.



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The current name and address of the site. The name and address must match the name and address on record with SACSCOC. The name and addresses on record can be verified via the institutional portal or via the institutional information available to the public on the SACSCOC website.
3. The new name and/or address of the site (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution’s existing site).
4. The intended implementation date (i.e., the effective date) of the change.
5. A statement stipulating the name and/or address change does not include a change of instructional location as described above.

Off-campus Instructional Site Closure

REQUIRES	Approval
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION	No

Closing an off-campus instructional site requires SACSCOC approval. Closure approval equally applies to

- notified sites and
- approved sites.

All closure approvals require an acceptable teach-out plan.

For SACSCOC, a site is considered closed as of the date the institution stops admitting students to the site; closure is *not* the date of last instruction.

Closure is defined this way because SACSCOC’s approval is of the teach-out process, not the closure per se, to help ensure students have reasonable opportunities to complete their program of study as originally planned at initial matriculation and with minimal disruption and additional costs. Because closure approval is for the teach-out process, not the closure per se (i.e., not after the fact), a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close. Institutional, system, or state definitions of closure must be reconciled by the institution with the SACSCOC definition.

If a program will no longer be offered at a site but the site will remain open for other programs, see program closure approval requirements under Program Closure.

A teach-out plan is due to SACSCOC as soon as possible after the institution decides to close a site.

Because time is of the essence – to provide students maximum time to consider and adapt to alternate completion plans – an institution may generally begin a site teach-out plan after it has been submitted to SACSCOC for approval. This assumes the institution completes a teach-out plan with all due care to address the requirements explained here and in the teach-out plan requirements in Appendix A. If upon review by SACSCOC the teach-out plan is incomplete or inadequate, the teach-out plan may be deferred pending additional information, explanation, or an acceptable revised teach-out plan is provided to SACSCOC. Although the institution may begin a teach-out immediately after submitting it, the closure is not approved until action is taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Starting and completing a teach-out plan before securing SACSCOC Board approval does not relieve the institution of its obligation to provide an acceptable teach-out plan.

What to submit

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an off-campus instructional site closure](#).

Off-campus Instructional Site Re-open

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An off-campus instructional site previously approved for closure may be re-opened within five years of the closure date by submitting notification. The closure date is the date the site was closed to admission, not necessarily the date of last instruction or the date SACSCOC approved the closure. If more than five years have elapsed, the site is subject to notification or approval as a new site. The name of a site may be changed concurrent with its re-opening, but the address of a site when re-opened must be the same as the address on record with the site was approved for closure.

Notes:

- A re-opened site is ineligible for relocation until at least one full academic term of instruction has been offered and completed at the site with students enrolled after the site was re-opened.
- A re-opened site is subject to review and visit by a peer review committee at the institution's next accreditation reviews.



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. The name and address of the site as it appears on the SACSCOC letter approving the site's closure.
3. The date SACSCOC approved the site's closure and either (1) the closure's case identification number (Case ID) found on the closure approval letter or (2) a copy of the closure approval letter.
4. The name of the site upon its re-opening.
5. The intended implementation date (i.e., the effective date) of the re-opening.
6. An affirmative statement by the institution
 - a. assuring the site remains appropriate for instruction and conducive for the specific type of instruction to be delivered at the site, including any specialized instructional equipment, materials, laboratories and supplies, and instructional support materials necessary; and
 - b. assuring students at the site will have adequate access to student support services and library and learning/information resources appropriate to the instruction offered at the site.

(End of Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes)

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION are subject to different or additional requirements for certain types of substantive change. An institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION if it

- has been placed on
 - Warning,
 - Probation, or
 - Probation for Good Cause

over the prior three academic years,

—OR—

- is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs as defined in defined in 34 C.F.R. § 668.13.*

Institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION are subject to the following requirements:

Off-campus instructional site changes —

- Approval through the extensive review pathway of all new off-campus instructional sites offering 50% or more of a program; i.e., the limited review pathway is not available
(versus two sites approved through the extensive pathway then approval through the limited review pathway thereafter for institutions not on restriction).

Program changes —

- Approval of new programs with 25% or more new content
(versus 50% for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval of a change in program length if program credit hours – or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies – increase or decrease by 25% or more
(versus the same percentage plus the additional criterion of changing expected time to completion by one term or more for institutions not on restriction),

* If an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs *and* if the institution is directed to do so by the USDE, then the institution is required to submit an Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan for approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees as described in this policy. This requirement is in addition to the institution being on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.



- Approval to add a method of delivery to an existing program
(versus notification for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval to initiate a program designed for prior learning
(versus notification for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval of an agreement with an entity (or entities) not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs to deliver less than 25% of a program's content
(versus notification for institutions not on restriction).

Committee Visits

A substantive change committee visit is a quality assurance mechanism designed to ensure the quality of an approved substantive change and to ensure the institution remains in compliance with all *Principles of Accreditation* and policies.

A committee visit is required for certain types of substantive change. A committee visit may also be required if certain institutional conditions are met. A committee visit is authorized at the time a substantive change is approved. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees and the SACSCOC President are authorized to appoint a substantive change committee to review an institution for any change requiring a more in-depth evaluation beyond the prospectus submitted by the institution. The Report of the Substantive Change Committee is reviewed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to determine ongoing accreditation status of an institution. A committee visit is within six months after *implementation* of the change.

A substantive change committee visit is required for the following six types of substantive change. The criteria for a committee visit are detailed under the specific requirements by substantive change type in policy.

1. **Initiating an off-campus instructional site that requires SACSCOC approval.**

In addition to a committee visit at the time of approval if one or more visit criteria are met, visits to a representative sample of off-campus instructional sites are required at the fifth-year interval between reaffirmations if the additional sites have been initiated since the last reaffirmation and if the sites have not been visited. At any time, SACSCOC may choose to authorize a visit to a new site(s) developed between the fifth-year review and the next scheduled reaffirmation of accreditation. As part of reaffirmation, SACSCOC conducts a thorough review of a representative sample of approved off-campus instructional sites. The extent of the review at reaffirmation depends, in part, on whether there has been a recent review of the site(s).

If a committee is authorized to visit an additional location, the committee is required to determine compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, including verification of personnel, facilities, and resources as asserted by the institution in its application for the additional site.

The institution-specific criteria for a committee visit are listed in the in the Off-campus Instructional Site – Approval section of policy.

2. **Initiating a branch campus.**

The criteria to qualify an off-campus instructional site as a branch campus are listed in the Off-campus Instructional Site Approval section of the procedures.

Initiating a branch campus requires a committee visit regardless of the number of already-approved off-campus instructional sites.

3. **Initiating a change in governance or a change in ownership with a change in control.**

Refer to the *Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status* policy for additional information.

4. **Initiating a merger / consolidation or acquisition.**

Refer to the *Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status* policy for additional information.

5. **Initiating a level change.**

Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved requires level change approval and a substantive change committee visit. Depending on the existing related programs offered by an institution, a committee visit may not be required of institutions moving from Levels III (offers the master's degree as the highest degree) to IV (offers the master's and specialist degree as the highest degrees) or from Levels V (offers three or fewer doctoral degrees as the highest degrees) to VI (offering four or more doctoral degrees as the highest degrees). A level change adding authorization of a degree level lower than the highest degree level currently authorized for an institution may not require a visit if the new program(s) at the lower degree level do not constitute a significant departure from existing programs. Refer to the *Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level* policy for additional information

6. **Initiating a competency-based education by direct assessment program that requires SACSCOC approval.**

A committee visit is required for *each* competency-based education by direct assessment program that is approved.

International Off-campus Instructional Sites

First International Site

Any other requirement for a substantive change committee visit notwithstanding, approval of an institution's first international* off-campus instructional site requires authorization of a substantive change committee visit.

Subsequent International Sites

Approval of an institution's subsequent international* off-campus instructional site may include authorization of a substantive change committee visit at the discretion of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Staff consider the following in making a committee visit recommendation to the Board:

- the institution's experience managing off-campus instructional sites, in general;
- the institution's experience managing international off-campus instructional sites, in particular, including sites in the proposed country or territory;
- known issues based on prior accreditation reviews suggesting institutional challenges to providing effective oversight of off-campus instructional sites; and
- the feasibility of visiting the site as part of a Fifth-year Interim Review or Reaffirmation within two years of approval of the site.

Authorization of a substantive change committee visit to an international site is made by the Board at the time an off-campus instructional site is approved. Any other off-campus instructional site committee requirement – e.g., approval of a site as a branch campus, approval of the institution's first three sites, etc. – supersedes an optional international site visit described herein.

* Any site outside of the country of the institution's main campus; United States territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Island) may be considered outside of the United States for off-campus instructional site purposes.

Fees and Expenses

Review Fee

The following fees as assessed for review of a substantive change prospectus or application:

- Review of a substantive change prospectus or level change application.....**\$500**
An institution may submit a single prospectus for up to ten off-campus instructional sites provided program offerings are *identical* across all sites; otherwise, a separate prospectus is required for exceptions.
- Fee per institution for a substantive change involving multiple institutions or entities (e.g., change of ownership, etc.) billed to the lead institution.....**\$500**
- Fee per institution for a substantive change involving multiple institutions or entities (merger/consolidation, acquisition) billed to the lead institution.....**\$500**
Effective July 1, 2021**\$5000**
- Fee per non-SACSCOC institution or entity for a substantive change involving institutions or entities (e.g., a merger / consolidation, change of ownership, etc.) billed to the lead SACSCOC-accredited institution**\$7,500**

SACSCOC will invoice review fees.

Substantive Change Committee Visit Fee and Expenses

In addition to the review fee, the following fee and expenses will be assessed to an institution hosting a substantive change committee visit:

- Actual cost of the committee visit including travel, lodging, Incidental Fee for each reviewer, and related expenses.....**Actual cost and**
- Administrative fee.....**\$2,000**

Review Procedures

Staff Options

Upon receipt of a substantive change prospectus, a SACSCOC staff member will review the prospectus and any supporting material submitted by the institution and will recommend to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees one of the actions listed below:

1. approve the substantive change, or
2. refer the substantive change to the SACSCOC Committee on Compliance and Reports for review and a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review of the Prospectus or Application

Prospectus: The Committee will review the prospectus and any additional material submitted, and will recommend one of the following actions:

1. accept the prospectus and recommend approval of the program, with or without a site visit.
2. defer action and seek additional information.
3. recommend denial of approval of the substantive change and continue the institution's accreditation. The reason for denial of approval may have been caused by an institution's current non-compliance with a standard or requirement. Consequently, denial may be accompanied by monitoring or imposition of a sanction.

Application: An application for offering programs at a level different from that for which the institution is approved is automatically referred to the Committees on Compliance and Reports, except for a change in degree levels from III to IV and from V to VI which are reviewed by staff. The Committee will review the application and any additional material submitted, and will recommend one of the following actions:

1. accept the application and approve the program, with a site visit within six months after initiation of the substantive change
2. defer action and seek additional information
3. deny approval of the substantive change and continue the institution's accreditation. The reason for denial of approval may have been caused by an institution's current non-compliance with a standard or requirement. Consequently, denial may be accompanied by monitoring or imposition of a sanction.

Preparation for a Substantive Change Committee Visit

When a Substantive Change Committee is authorized, it is charged with determining the institution's continued compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* following the initiation of the change. The visit will occur within six months after initiation of the change. In preparation for this visit, the institution will complete the appropriate substantive change documentation template which cites relevant Standards and the roster of faculty members who will be teaching in the program or at the site. Both the template and the Faculty Roster form are available on the SACSCOC Web site (www.sacscoc.org) under "Substantive Changes". The institution's SACSCOC staff representative will inform the institution of the composition and schedule for the Committee.

Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review by a Substantive Change Committee

The report of the Substantive Change Committee, together with the response of the institution to the recommendations contained in that report (due within five months of the Committee visit), will be reviewed by the Committee on Compliance and Reports. The Committee on Compliance and Reports may recommend one of the following actions:

1. continue the institution in accreditation, with or without a monitoring report
2. continue the institution in accreditation, impose a sanction, and request a monitoring report, with/without a special committee visit (mandatory visit if placed on Probation)
3. discontinue accreditation.

Teach-outs

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 twenty-five 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.

Following review and approval of a teach-out plan that includes a program that is accredited by another accrediting agency, the Commission will notify that accreditor of its approval.

Teach-out Agreements

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 twenty-five

percent or 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.

For approval by SACSCOC, the agreement must be between institutions that are accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, be consistent with applicable standards in the *Principles of Accreditation* and with SACSCOC policies, and provide for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring that:

1. the teach-out institution has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to that provided by the teach-out institution; and
2. the teach-out institution demonstrates that it can provide students access to the program(s) and services without requiring them to move or travel substantial distances.

Please see the SACSCOC Good Practices document *Closing a Program, Site, Branch or Institution* for additional discussion of issues regarding closing of programs, sites, branch campuses or institutions.

Closing an Institution without an Agreement

If an institution accredited by SACSCOC closes and is no longer accredited, SACSCOC will seek assistance from the United States Department of Education and appropriate state agencies to help its students find reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional expense.

Applicant and Candidacy Teach-out Plans

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. When an applicant is authorized a Candidacy Committee, it must submit an institutional contingency teach-out plan as a part of its Candidacy Report to the Candidacy Committee. The plan ensures students completing the teach-out would meet curricular requirements for professional licensure or certification, if any, and must include a list of academic programs offered by the institution and the names of other institutions that offer similar programs that could potentially enter into a teach out agreement with the institution. If the institution does not receive initial accreditation within two years of becoming a candidate, the institution will remain a candidate upon the condition that only the currently enrolled students have had a reasonable time to complete the activities in its teach-out plan to assist students in transferring or completing their programs, but for no more than 120 days unless approved by SACSCOC Board of Trustees for Good Cause.

3. Appendices

Appendix A: What to Submit for Approvals

This appendix provides a list – an outline – of the required content for each prospectus and teach-out plan requiring SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval prior to implementation. Required content is provided for each type of substantive change requiring approval identified in the Specific Requirements by Type of Change section of this document. The content of this appendix is arranged by the same categories – Institutional Changes, Program Changes, and Off-campus Instructional Site Changes – and in the same order.

Use the content list as the verbatim outline of the prospectus or teach-out plan. Provide the information in the same order the information is listed in this appendix: substantive change readers know exactly what they need to see for a particular substantive change type and where it is expected to be in the prospectus. All listed content is required; do not leave any items unanswered even if the institutional response is “no” or “does not apply” – in those circumstances, provide an explanation.

Prospectuses are limited to 25 pages exclusive of appendices. Make judicious use of appendices by including only information necessary to support the institution’s proposed change: volume is not a valid substitute for substance. Moving content to an appendix is acceptable to meet the 25-page limit; Faculty Rosters, for example, may be moved to an appendix as necessary at the institution’s discretion. Respect substantive change reviewers’ time and professional judgment by providing direct, relevant, and complete information.

Prospectuses must be self-contained. The prospectus may not include materials by reference by linking to an external website. All information proffered by the institution in support of the proposed change must be on file.

Before beginning the prospectus, ensure the guidance and requirements provided in the General Requirements section and in the Procedures section of this document have been thoroughly reviewed and are understood.

Common Content

Many substantive change prospectuses contain the same standard or common content. Instead of listing that content for every substantive change type, the common content is identified here. In the list of required content by substantive change type, required common content is identified and can be copied-and-pasted from this section into the outline for the prospectus.

Common Content A – Background and Context

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. A transmittal letter signed by the CEO or institutional liaison briefly explaining the submission.
3. A list of programs offered by the institution (excerpt from the catalog or a printout of a webpage is acceptable).
4. Abstract (one page maximum)
 - a. Briefly describe the proposed change to include the intended implementation date.
 - b. Provide projected number of students, if applicable.
 - c. Indicate the projected life of the change, as applicable: one-time/limited duration or ongoing).
 - d. Describe the primary target audience or market.
 - e. Describe the strengths of the institution to undertake the change.
5. Describe how the need for the change was determined and how the change was approved by the institution.
6. Describe how the change is consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.
7. Provide documentation of faculty involvement in the planning and approval of the change.
8. Provide evidence of legal authority for the change if approval is required by the governing board or the state.

Note for reviews subject to approval by the Executive Council: If the change is pending approval by the institution's governing board or by a state board or authority, note the expected approval date. The institution will be contacted at the time of review for evidence of approvals pending at the time of submission; do not send approval documentation until requested.

Note for review subject to approval by the full Board of Trustees: Evidence of all required approvals must be included with the original submission.

Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications

1. Provide a completed Faculty Roster Form for faculty members scheduled to teach in the new program, site, or method of delivery. Follow directions for completing the Faculty Roster which requires the institution to present the qualifications of each faculty member to teach the courses assigned to them. Use the standard Faculty Roster Form and instructions:
 - a. Faculty Roster Form [\[DOCX\]](#)
 - b. Faculty Roster Form Instruction [\[PDF\]](#)

2. Include on the Faculty Roster Form the courses *to be taught*; do not include historical teaching assignments.
 - a. For a program prospectus: list all courses in the curriculum; exclude general education courses, if applicable, unless the general education curriculum is the substantive change being submitted for review.
 - b. For an off-campus instructional site prospectus: list all courses to be taught at the site for the first 12 months of operation.
3. For a new program, demonstrate the institution has at least one faculty member qualified in the discipline to develop the curriculum and or teach in the program (Refer to Standard 6.2a (Faculty qualifications) of the *Principles of Accreditation*. To-be-hired faculty can be included on the Faculty Roster with expected qualifications for teaching the courses assigned.
4. Provide narrative with supporting evidence to demonstrate the number of full-time faculty members will be adequate to support the initiative and describe the impact on faculty workload of the new program, new site, or distance delivery.
5. For a graduate program, (a) demonstrate scholarship and research capability of faculty members teaching in the program and (b), if applicable, document faculty experience in directing student research or creative work (always applicable for doctoral programs).

Common Content C – Resources

Library and Learning Resources

1. List and describe discipline-specific learning resources to support a new program. Do not list all library resources; include only those related to the proposed change. If electronic databases are listed, describe the discipline-specific suites of resources rather than the name only of the database or the consortium through which it is accessed (Such as Galileo, Louis, TexShare, Viva, etc.).
2. Document discipline-specific refereed journals and primary source materials. This is particularly important for graduate programs and especially important for doctoral programs.
3. Describe how students enrolled in a new program, at an off-campus instructional site, or in a distance education program can access discipline-specific library and learning resources.
4. Describe how students are made aware of library and learning resources available to them, how they can learn how to access the resources and are instructed in the use of online resources, as well as on-site library resources.
5. Describe resources to support students in access to and use of library and learning/information resources.

Student Support Services

1. Describe specific programs, services, and activities which will support students enrolled in the new program and / or enrolled at a new off-campus site /additional location and / or enrolled in distance education programs. Do not list student support services which are not relevant to the specific change.

Physical Resources

1. Describe the adequacy of physical facilities which will support the change.
2. Describe equipment which will be available for a new program or available at a new site.
3. Describe the impact that the proposed change will have on physical facilities and equipment for existing programs and services.

Financial Resources

1. Describe the financial resources available to support the proposed change, including a budget for the first year of the proposed change. For a new branch campus, a three-year budget is required. Do not send the institutional budget.
2. Include in the budget resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services for the proposed change.
3. Include projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow for the proposed change.
4. Include a contingency plan in case expected revenues do not materialize.

Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes

1. Provide a brief description of institutional assessment processes.
 2. Describe how the institution will incorporate the proposed change into the institution-wide assessment infrastructure and processes.
-

Institutional Changes

Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Describe the current measure and the proposed measure of student progress to completion.
3. Describe the rationale for the change.
4. Provide a narrative explanation or a chart illustrating the conversion equivalency between the current method and the proposed method.
5. Demonstrate the proposed method will, for all programs, maintain compliance with the Standard 9.2 (program length) of the *Principles of Accreditation*. Provide equivalencies to semester credit hours, if applicable.
6. Provide evidence the proposed measure is published and accessible to all concerned parties (students, faculty, staff) in compliance with the Standard 9.7 (program requirements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
7. Provide evidence the proposed measure is published in institutional policy and accurately reflects how the policy and procedures will be implemented in compliance with Standard 10.1 (academic policies) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
8. Describe how the institution will determine the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses under the proposed measure regardless of the method of delivery.
9. Describe how the institution will provide oversight of the policy in compliance with the SACSCOC *Credit Hours* policy and with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide Common Content A – Background and Context, relative to the proposed change.
2. Provide a description of the program or programs that will be taught via credit/course-based competency-based education methodology for the first time.
3. Describe the infrastructure to support credit/course-based competency-based education.
4. Describe how faculty members will be trained in credit/course-based competency-based education and how courses will be developed.
5. Describe technical support for students enrolled in courses delivered by credit/course-based competency-based education and technical support for faculty members.
6. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change.
7. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change.

8. Describe how effectiveness of programs offered via credit/course-based competency-based education will be assessed.
9. Provide Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change.

Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide Common Content A – Background and Context, relative to the proposed change.
2. Provide a description of the first program that will be taught 50% or more via distance education.
3. Describe the infrastructure to support distance delivery methods to include the learning management system and the administrative structure the support distance education.
4. Describe how faculty members will be trained in distance delivery methodology and how courses will be developed.
5. Describe technical support for students enrolled in courses delivered by distance methods and technical support for faculty members.
6. Document compliance with Standard 10.6 (distance and correspondence education) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
7. Document the institution’s approval in any state where distance education students may be located.
8. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change.
9. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change.
10. Describe how effectiveness of programs offered via distance delivery will be assessed.
11. Provide Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change.

Institution Closure

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. Communication
 - a. Describe a communication plan to inform students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of the institution’s closure. The plan
 - i. must not rely on a single medium (e.g., email only),
 - ii. must be appropriate to each stakeholder,
 - iii. must include how it will inform students how to access transcripts, other academic records (such as advising plans), financial records (such as payments due to the institution), and financial aid records (such as loan processors), and

- iv. must explain how it will inform students of any additional costs associated with teach-out options.
2. Student academic records
 - a. Describe a plan to preserve and make available to former students all academic transcripts including validations/confirmations of academic credentials awarded to former students.
 - b. Identify the party to whom academic records will be entrusted and include a physical address and contact information.
 - c. Identify any state or other governmental agency requirement regarding disposition of academic records.
 - d. Describe a plan to inform current and former students how they may request transcript copies.
 - e. Include a description of any encumbrances placed on access to academic records such as withholding transcript copies if a former student has an outstanding balance owed *to the institution*.
 3. Student accounts receivable
 - a. Describe a plan to collect outstanding balances owed *to the institution* by students and former students after the closure.
 - b. Include a description of how students and former students will be informed of the institution's intention to collect.
 4. Refunds and loan discharges
 - a. Describe a plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on State refund policies.
 5. Re-employment
 - a. Explain how the institution will assist faculty and staff in finding new employment.
 6. Programs (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
 - a. Provide a list of all academic programs offered by the institution for all credentials (e.g., certificates, diplomas, degrees) and for all instructional levels (undergraduate and graduate).
 - b. The program list must include for *each* program
 - i. at least two teach-out institutions offering comparable programs where students could complete their program of study, and
 - ii. for each program / teach-out institution combination,
 1. a statement of assurance that the method of delivery is comparable,
 2. a good faith assessment of the number and types of credits each teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to students' enrollment,
 3. a statement of assurance that the curricular requirements at the teach-out institution meet requirements for professional licensure or certification as applicable to the program,



4. a statement of assurance that students are not required to move or travel substantial distances or durations with possible exceptions for highly specialized programs, and
 5. the institution's plan to provide a clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.
7. Teach-out institutions (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
- a. Provide a list of all institutions identified as offering comparable programs where students could complete their programs of study to include
 - i. the name and web address of each institution,
 - ii. the institution's accreditor or accreditator(s),
 - iii. a good faith statement of assurance that the institution is in good standing with its institutional accreditator(s), the U.S. Department of Education, and is not under investigation, subject to an action, or being prosecuted for an issue related to academic quality, misrepresentation, fraud, or other severe matters by a law enforcement agency.
8. Students (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
- a. Provide a list of all enrolled students by academic program to include each student's current progress to completion
9. Spreadsheet templates
- a. Information for items 6 (Programs), 7 (Teach-out institutions), and 8 (Students) above must be reported on SACSCOC-provided spreadsheet templates. The templates may be accessed from the substantive change webpage under "Documents and Templates." Instruction and guidance are provided within the templates.
10. Teach-out agreements
- a. A teach-out agreement is usually required if any significant consideration *other than* the transfer of academic credit is agreed upon between the institution and a teach-out institution. If the teach-out institution is only transferring credit and making no additional consideration for students covered under a teach-out plan, then the institutions are, in essence, executing a transfer articulation agreement and a teach-out agreement is not necessary. Teach-out agreements are subject to approval separate from the approval of the teach-out plan.

Institution Relocation

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
1. Provide the current physical address and the proposed (new) physical address.
2. Provide the intended implementation or effective date of the relocation.
3. Describe the rationale and need for the relocation.

4. Provide evidence the relocation has been approved by the institution's governing board and, if required, the state governing board or authority.
5. Describe the planned process for the relocation (e.g., move at one time or phase-in with date of implementation).
6. Provide projected number of students to be impacted.
7. Describe the instructional methods of delivery to be used at the proposed location and if they differ from the current location.
8. Describe the educational programs offered at the current location and programs to be offered at the proposed location, identifying any programs that will not continue to be offered once the institution relocates.
9. Provide narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members at the new location will be adequate to support the mission and goals of the institution.
10. Describe the impact of relocation on library and learning/information resources.
11. Describe the impact of relocation on student support services.
12. Describe the physical facilities of the proposed location and demonstrate how they are adequate to appropriately serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities.
13. Describe how the institution will provide a health, safe and secure environment for all members of the campus community at the new location.
14. Describe financial resources available for the relocation, including a three-year budget.
15. Provide a contingency plan in the event required resources to fund the relocation do not materialize.
16. Describe the impact of the relocation on the assessment of student learning outcomes for each educational program.
17. Describe the impact of the relocation on the assessment of academic and student services that support student success.

Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. Communication
 - a. Describe a communication plan to inform students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of the institution's closure. The plan
 - i. must not rely on a single medium (e.g., email only),
 - ii. must be appropriate to each stakeholder,
 - iii. must include how it will inform students how to access transcripts, other academic records (such as advising plans), financial records (such as payments due to the institution), and financial aid records (such as loan processors), and
 - iv. must explain how it will inform students of any additional costs associated with teach-out options.

2. Student academic records
 - a. Describe a plan to preserve and make available to former students all academic transcripts including validations/confirmations of academic credentials awarded to former students.
 - b. Identify the party to whom academic records will be entrusted and include a physical address and contact information.
 - c. Identify any state or other governmental agency requirement regarding disposition of academic records.
 - d. Describe a plan to inform current and former students how they may request transcript copies.
 - e. Include a description of any encumbrances placed on access to academic records such as withholding transcript copies if a former student has an outstanding balance owed *to the institution*.
3. Student accounts receivable
 - a. Describe a plan to collect outstanding balances owed *to the institution* by students and former students after the closure.
 - b. Include a description of how students and former students will be informed of the institution's intention to collect.
4. Refunds and loan discharges
 - a. Describe a plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on State refund policies.
5. Re-employment
 - a. Explain how the institution will assist faculty and staff in finding new employment.
6. Programs (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
 - a. Provide a list of all academic programs offered by the institution for all credentials (e.g., certificates, diplomas, degrees) and for all instructional levels (undergraduate and graduate).
 - b. The program list must include for *each* program
 - i. at least two teach-out institutions offering comparable programs where students could complete their program of study, and
 - ii. for each program / teach-out institution combination,
 1. a statement of assurance that the method of delivery is comparable,
 2. a good faith assessment of the number and types of credits each teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to students' enrollment,
 3. a statement of assurance that the curricular requirements at the teach-out institution meet requirements for professional licensure or certification as applicable to the program,
 4. a statement of assurance that students are not required to move or travel substantial distances or durations with possible exceptions for highly specialized programs, and

5. the institution’s plan to provide a clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.
7. Teach-out institutions (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
 - a. Provide a list of all institutions identified as offering comparable programs where students could complete their programs of study to include
 - i. the name and web address of each institution,
 - ii. the institution’s accreditor or accretor(s),
 - iii. a good faith statement of assurance that the institution is in good standing with its institutional accretor(s), the U.S. Department of Education, and is not under investigation, subject to an action, or being prosecuted for an issue related to academic quality, misrepresentation, fraud, or other severe matters by a law enforcement agency.
8. Students (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
 - a. Provide a list of all enrolled students by academic program to include each student’s current progress to completion
9. Spreadsheet templates
 - a. Information for items 6 (Programs), 7 (Teach-out institutions), and 8 (Students) above must be reported on SACSCOC-provided spreadsheet [templates](#). The templates may also be accessed from the substantive change [webpage](#) under “Documents and Templates.” Instruction and guidance are provided within the templates.
10. Teach-out agreements (optional at the institution’s discretion)
 - a. A teach-out agreement is usually required if any significant consideration *other than* the transfer of academic credit is agreed upon between the institution and a teach-out institution. If the teach-out institution is only transferring credit and making no additional consideration for students covered under a teach-out plan, then the institutions are, in essence, executing a transfer articulation agreement and a teach-out agreement is not necessary. Teach-out agreements are subject to approval separate from the approval of the teach-out plan.

Mission Change

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. Provide the current mission statement.
3. Provide the proposed mission statement.
4. Provide the intended implementation or effective date of the change.
5. Provide evidence of the institution’s governing board approval of the mission change
6. Describe the impetus and rationale for the mission change.
7. Assess the impact on the number and mix of programs in the institution’s portfolio.

8. Assess the impact on the number and composition of the institution's faculty in the short- and long-term.
9. Assess the impact on staff members.
10. Describe the impact on the non-academic operations of the institutions, e.g., business services, facilities and maintenance, intercollegiate athletics, etc.
11. Describe the current financial stability of the institution.
12. Assess the financial impact of the mission change.'
13. Describe any expected, forthcoming substantive change because of (not concurrent with) the mission change, e.g., new program prospectuses, off-campus instructional site prospectuses, level change application, etc.

Program Changes

Clock-Credit Hour Conversion

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. The name of the program.
3. The credential of the program (e.g., associate of applied science, certificate, etc.).
4. The instructional level of the program (undergraduate or graduate if not apparent from the credential).
5. The effective date of the change.
6. Description of the conversion: clock hours to credit hours or credit hours to clock hours.
7. Explain the motivation and rationale for the change.
8. Demonstrate the equivalency between the current measure and the proposed measure and the formula used to make the conversion.
9. Demonstrate the conversion will not negatively impact student learning outcomes.
10. Demonstrate the conversion will not negatively impact expected time to completion.
11. Assess the change relative to the requirements in the SACSCOC *Credit Hours* policy.

Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. The program or programs for which the entity/entities will provide academic content.
3. The rationale for entering into the agreement.
4. A description of the expected benefits to (a) the students and (b) the institution.

5. The name and contact information for at least one person at the institution and at each participating entity.
6. Demonstrate the institution's determination that the entity or entities in the agreement are non-title IV entities for the purpose of substantive change as provided in the *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines* section of this policy.
7. A statement of the institution's intent for students enrolled in the program(s) covered under the agreement to be eligible to receive title IV federal financial aid including the portion of each program or programs that will be eligible.
 - a. If the intent is for students to receive title IV aid,
 - i. demonstrate the institution has assessed and reached a good-faith conclusion of the program(s) title IV eligibility under the terms of the agreement, and
 - ii. if any portion of any program or programs will not be eligible for title IV aid, demonstrate the institution's plan to communicate this information to the affected students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.
 - b. If the intent is students will not receive title IV aid, demonstrate the institution's plan to communicate this information to the affected students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.
8. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change.
9. A copy of a signed and dated written agreement amongst all parties to include:
 - a. roles and responsibilities of all parties,
 - b. a description of the regularly scheduled evaluation process to validate quality and integrity of the content,
 - c. a description of the regularly scheduled review and approval by all parties of course content and, as warranted, program curricula,
 - d. assessment of student learning outcomes and acceptable thresholds of demonstrated student learning,
 - e. boilerplate language that SACSCOC accreditation does not extend to the non-SACSCOC entities and stipulating the institution is responsible for ensuring compliance by the participating entity/entities, and
 - f. provisions for the regular review of the agreement including renewal and termination of the agreement.

Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. For each partnering institution, provide
 - a. the name, address, and web address of the institution,
 - b. the institutional accreditor of each institution,
 - c. if the accreditor of each institution is a U.S. Department of Education (USDE) recognized institutional accreditor.
3. For each partnering institution, provide the name and contact information of the primary responsible party who for the proposed program.

4. A copy of a dated and signed agreement between or amongst all participating institutions.
5. For each partnering institution accredited by USDE recognized institutional accreditor, document each institution is not on public sanction by the accreditor.
6. Describe the program curriculum and graduation requirements.
7. Document the institution meets provisions of Standard 10.9 (cooperative academic arrangements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*,
8. Document how the institution considers and award transfer credit from another institution, as applicable.
9. Describe the institution's plan to monitor and ensure that the quality of contributions made by the partner institution(s) meets SACSCOC expectations.
10. A plan and process produced by the SACSCOC-accredited institutions ensuring that the agreement does not result in the appearance of extending SACSCOC accreditation to partner institutions through promotional materials, academic publications, student transcripts, credentials verifying program completion, and releases to the new media (See the disclaimer statement in the *Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures*).
11. Describe how courses and other program requirements will be transcribed and which institution(s) will maintain the official academic transcript.
12. Describe the institutions plan to award a single credential or diploma bearing the imprints and signatures of the officers of each participating institution. Demonstrate how the institution will represent, via the diploma and transcript, that the academic credential was jointly award by multiple institutions.

If one or more partnering institution is not accredited by a USDE-recognized accreditor, provide the following additional information:

13. Demonstrate that the written agreement includes boilerplate language that SACSCOC accreditation does not extend to the non-SACSCOC entities and stipulating that the SACSCOC accredited institution(s) is(are) responsible for ensuring compliance by the participating entity/entities.
14. A description of
 - a. any external governmental or accrediting agency approval for the institution(s) or program(s) involved in the agreement, excluding the SACSCOC institution(s);
 - b. the process of quality assurance used by the agency granting this approval; and
 - c. any required legal or licensing approvals.
15. Documentation that faculty involved in the collaboration are qualified to teach assigned components or courses and a description of the means by the SACSCOC-accredited institution(s) will monitor these qualifications. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the joint academic award.
16. Documentation of the physical resources and learning resources contributed by the institution(s) not accredited by a USDE-recognized accreditor.

Method of Delivery – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The name of the program (to indicate the discipline).
3. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Associate of Arts, Master of Accounting).
4. The instructional level (undergraduate or graduate, if not obvious from the credential).
5. The method of delivery to be added: competency-based education, distance education, or face-to-face instruction.
6. The intended implementation date.
7. An assessment of the impact of the addition of a method of delivery relative to the reason the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.
8. Demonstrate the addition of a method of delivery will not negatively impact student learning outcomes, student support services, library and learning/information resources, or institutional financial stability.

Reminder: Method of delivery approval is required only for institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

New Program – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide Common Content A – Background and Context, relative to the proposed change.
2. Provide the curriculum for the program.
3. Provide a projected schedule of course offerings for the program
4. Provide program-specific goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program.
5. Describe how the student learning outcomes for the program will be assessed.
6. Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program. (Do not provide syllabi.)
7. Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program.
8. Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
9. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program.
10. For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in the traditional formats have been achieved.
11. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change.
12. Provide Common Content C – Resource, relative to the proposed change.
13. Provide Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change.

Program Closure

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. Provide the closure date, defined by SACSCOC as the date when students are no longer *admitted*.
3. An explanation of how affected parties – students, faculty, and staff – will be informed of the impending closure.
4. An explanation of how all affected students will be helped to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption or additional costs.
5. Explain whether the students subject to the teach-out plan will incur additional charges or other expenses because of the teach-out and, if so, how the students will be notified.
6. Copies of signed teach-out agreements with other institutions, if applicable.
7. A description of how faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employment.

Note: Do not submit individually identifiable student information.

Program Designed for Prior Learning – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. The name of the program (to include the program's discipline).
3. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Bachelor of Applied Science, Master of Professional Studies, etc.).
4. The program's instructional level (undergraduate or graduate, if not obvious from the credential).
5. The intended implementation date.
6. A description of the prior learning required as a condition of admission.
7. A description of how the institution
 - a. will assess prior learning,
 - b. award credit, if applicable, for prior learning,
 - c. establish the validity of its prior learning assessment,
 - d. how faculty are involved in the assessment of prior learning,
 - e. how the faculty involved in the assessment of prior learning are qualified in the disciplines in which credit for prior learning is awarded, and
 - f. how the institution, with faculty involvement, periodically assesses third parties on which it relies for prior learning assessment, if applicable.
8. Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (Policies for awarding credit) for the *Principles of Accreditation*.
9. Provide specific programmatic goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program.

10. Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program (do not provide syllabi).
11. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program.
12. For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in the traditional formats have been achieved.
13. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change.
14. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change.
15. Provide Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change.
16. An assessment of the impact of the addition of a program designed for prior learning relative to the reason the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

Reminder: A program designed for prior learning is required only for institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

Program Length Change

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
 2. Provided a description of the program.
 3. Provide the intended implementation date.
 4. Describe the rationale for the increase or decrease in program length.
 5. Describe how the change was approved by the institution.
 6. Describe how the faculty was involved in the review and approval of the planned change.
 7. Provide a ‘before’ and ‘after’ comparison of the curriculum.
 8. Describe changes in student learning outcomes because of the program length change.
 9. Provide an analysis of the impact of the change in student learning outcomes.
 10. For a decrease in program length, explain how program quality and integrity are maintained with fewer credit hours and/or a shorter time-to-completion.
 11. Provide an explanation of the impact on students’ time-to-completion.
 12. Provide an explanation of the financial impact to students.
 13. Provide an explanation of the impact on staffing and faculty workloads.
-

Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes

Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus) by Extensive Review

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution's existing site).
3. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers only).
4. The intended implementation date.
5. Indicate if the site will be a branch campus.
6. If the site will be a branch campus, demonstrate the site will meet each of the following criteria:
 - a. The site is geographically apart from an institution's main campus.
 - b. Instruction is delivered at the site.
 - c. The site is permanent.
 - d. The site offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
 - e. The site has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.
 - f. The site has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

For the institutional level review –

7. The institution must demonstrate, at an institutional level, the capacity to effectively oversee and provide ongoing support for off-campus instructional sites / additional locations (including branch campuses, as applicable), by the following:
 - a. Demonstrating how the institution will have administrative oversight of off-campus instructional sites / additional locations that ensures academic control of all off-campus instructional sites.
 - b. Demonstrating how the institution will have academic assessment and evaluation processes that include the regular and robust assessment and evaluation of each of the institution's off-campus instructional sites / additional locations.
 - c. Demonstrating how the institution will engage in ongoing and thorough long-range planning processes for expansion of instructional and other services to off-campus instructional sites / additional locations.
 - d. Demonstrating financial resources and financial stability by submitting for review the institution's two most recent financial statement audits.

Note: *As part of the extensive review, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will review the institution's audits and SACSCOC financial responsibility score based on financial data submitted by the institution as part of its annual financial profile. If it is not satisfied with the institution's financial stability, the SACSCOC Board of Trustee may deny approval.*

For the site-specific review –

8. Provide Common Content A – Background and Context, relative to the proposed change.
9. Describe the educational program(s) to be offered at the site. If a program to be offered at the site is a new program requiring approval, also provide the prospectus information for New Program – Approval.
10. Provide documentation of approval to operate in the state where the site is located if the site is outside of the state of the institution’s main campus (in addition to the state approval evidence in Common Content A).
11. Provide the course schedule and course descriptions to be taught during the first year of operation; do not provide syllabi.
12. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change. All courses to be taught during the first year of operation must be assigned to at least one faculty member on the Faculty Roster.
13. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change.
14. Describe in narrative form, the financial resources needed to initiate and provide ongoing support for the site and the availability and source of these resources.
15. Include a one-year budget for the new site, except for a branch campus (see below).
16. For a branch campus, include a three-year budget including projected revenue and expenses and cash flow. Do not include an institutional budget.

Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus) by Limited Review

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution’s existing site).
3. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers only).
4. The intended implementation date.
5. Indicate if the site will be a branch campus.
6. If the site will be a branch campus, demonstrate the site will meet each of the following criteria:
 - a. The site is geographically apart from an institution’s main campus.
 - b. Instruction is delivered at the site.
 - c. The site is permanent.
 - d. The site offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
 - e. The site has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.
 - f. The site has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
7. Provide Common Content A – Background and Context, relative to the proposed change.
8. Describe the educational program(s) to be offered at the site. If a program to be offered at the site is a new program requiring approval, also provide the prospectus information for New Program – Approval.

9. Provide documentation of approval to operate in the state where the site is located if the site is outside of the state of the institution's main campus (in addition to the state approval evidence in Common Content A).
10. Provide the course schedule and course descriptions to be taught during the first year of operation; do not provide syllabi.
11. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change. All courses to be taught during the first year of operation must be assigned to at least one faculty member on the Faculty Roster.
12. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change.
13. Describe in narrative form, the financial resources needed to initiate and provide ongoing support for the site and the availability and source of these resources.
14. Include a one-year budget for the new site, except for a branch campus (see below).
15. For a branch campus, include a three-year budget including projected revenue and expenses and cash flow. Do not include an institutional budget.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation - Branch Campus

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Provide the current physical address and the proposed (new) physical address of the branch campus.
3. Provide the intended implementation or effective date of the relocation.
4. Describe the rationale and need for the relocation.
5. Provide evidence the relocation has been approved by the institution's governing board and, if required, the state governing board or authority.
6. Describe the planned process for the relocation (e.g., move at one time or phase-in with date of implementation).
7. Provide the number of students to be impacted.
8. Describe the instructional methods of delivery to be used at the proposed location and if they differ from the current location.
9. Describe the programs offered at the current location and programs to be offered at the proposed location, identifying any programs that will not continue to be offered once the institution relocates.
10. Provide narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members at the new location will be adequate to support the mission and goals of the institution.
11. Describe the impact of relocation on library and learning/information resources.
12. Describe the impact of relocation on student support services.
13. Describe the physical facilities of the proposed location and demonstrate how they are adequate to appropriately serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities.
14. Describe how the institution will provide a health, safe and secure environment for all members of the campus community at the new location.
15. Describe financial resources available for the relocation, including a three-year budget.

16. Provide a contingency plan in the event required resources to fund the relocation do not materialize.
17. Describe the impact of the relocation on the assessment of student learning outcomes for each educational program.
18. Describe the impact of the relocation on the assessment of academic and student services that support student success.

Off-campus Instructional Site Closure

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. Provide the closure date, defined by SACSCOC as the date when students are no longer *admitted*.
3. An explanation of how affected parties – students, faculty, and staff – will be informed of the impending closure.
4. An explanation of how all affected students will be helped to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption or additional costs.
5. Explain whether the students subject to the teach-out plan will incur additional charges or other expenses because of the teach-out and, if so, how the students will be notified.
6. Copies of signed teach-out agreements with other institutions, if applicable.
7. A description of how faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employment.

Note: Do not submit individually identifiable student information.

Appendix B: Glossary

This glossary provides basic definitions of commonly used substantive change words and phrases. It is designed as a quick reference only. Refer to the more complete and detailed information elsewhere in this policy and in related policies.

Acquisition: Acquisition is the sale, exchange, or transfer of a component of an institution's or entity's assets to a SACSCOC accredited institution.

(See also merger/consolidation)

Additional location

See off-campus instructional site / additional location

Approval: An official action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees enabling an institution to implement a proposed substantive change. All changes requiring approval are defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. An institution secures approval by submitting a substantive change prospectus or application subject to satisfactory review by the Board of Trustees.

Branch campus: An off-campus instruction site / additional location

- that is geographically apart from an institution's main campus,
- where instruction is delivered, and
- is independent of the main campus of an institution.

An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it

1. is permanent;
2. offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential;
3. has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
4. has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

Closure: The ending of instruction

- in an educational program,
- at off-campus instructional site,
- in an educational program at an off-campus instructional site or main campus,
- by a method of delivery, or

- at an entire institution
- such that a student cannot complete their program of study as planned.

(See also teach-out agreement and teach-out plan)

Competency-based education: A method of delivery in which competencies are learned through interaction with faculty and an academic credential is earned based on what students demonstrate they can do. A competency is a well-defined statement of what a person can do as a result of learning. Progression and completion are measured by demonstrated attainment of competencies.

(See also competency-based education by course/credit-based approach, competency-based education by direct assessment, and method of delivery)

Competency-based education by course / credit-based approach: Demonstrating competencies is embedded in a traditional curriculum with courses completed, credits earned, and a credential awarded. Students typically enroll in an academic term and course credits are awarded at the end of the term by demonstrating mastery of the competencies associated with a course. Students may accelerate learning through demonstration of competencies. Transcripts record courses and grades, though the institution may opt to maintain a separate transcript of competencies.

Competency-based education by direct assessment: Progression and completion of a program is based solely on demonstrating mastery of prescribed competencies. There are no academic terms (i.e., calendars), courses, or credit hours. Students progress through a program's competencies at their own pace within limits, if any, established by the institution. The academic transcript consists of

successfully demonstrated competencies and the level of mastery attained.

Cooperative academic arrangement: An agreement between a SACSCOC-accredited institution and another entity (or entities) to deliver program content recorded on the SACSCOC institution's transcript as its own (see also Standard 10.9 (Cooperative academic arrangements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*). Examples include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, collaborative agreements with international institutions, and contractual instruction.

Correspondence courses: Courses in which students and instructors are not in the same locations and in which instructional materials and learning assessments (such as examinations, assignments, creative works, etc.) are delivered electronically or by mail. Interaction between instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Courses are usually self-paced within limits.

Direct Assessment

See competency-based education by direct assessment

Distance education: A method of delivery in which 50% or more of instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same location. It includes synchronous (live or in real-time) and asynchronous (not live or in real-time) instruction.

(See also method of delivery)

Distance learning

See distance education

Dual academic award: A student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to each institution granting academic awards at the same

credential level.

(See also joint academic award)

Educational program

See program

Face-to-face instruction: A method of delivery in which 50% or more of instruction occurs when students and instructors are in the same location.

(See also method of delivery)

Federal regulations: Rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as codified in the Code of Federal Regulation (C.F.R.) including but not limited to 34 C.F.R. § 600, 602, 603, 654, 668, and 674 (*Federal Register*, Vol. 84, No. 212, November 1, 2019/Rules and Regulations; pp. 58834-58933), viz., § 600.2 (definitions), § 602.22 (substantive changes and other reporting requirements), and § 602.24 (additional procedures certain institutional agencies must have).

Geographically apart (or geographically separate): Non-contiguous locations independent of distance.

See also off-campus instructional site / additional location (and branch campus)

Joint academic award: A student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to the institutions granting a single academic award bearing the names, seals, and officials' signatures of each participating institution.

(See also dual academic award)

Merger/consolidation: The sale, exchange, or transfer of all assets of at least one institution or entity to a SACSCOC accredited institution. Following a merger/consolidation, only one institution remains in operation as a separate institution or entity.

(See also acquisition)

Method of delivery: The principal method by which instruction is delivered to include:

- competency-based education (all forms),
- distance education, and

- face-to-face instruction.

Notification: An official communication from an institution to SACSCOC as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. A notification is complete only when accepted by SACSCOC upon satisfactory review by staff.
(See also approval)

Off-campus instructional site / additional location: A location

- geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus and
- where instruction is delivered.

An off-campus instructional site may qualify as a branch campus.

(See also branch campus)

Program: a coherent course of study leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, diploma, certificate, or other generally recognized credential.

Exception: General education, for substantive change purposes, is usually considered a program even if a credential is not awarded. See also Standard 8.2.b (Student outcomes: general education) Standard 9.3 (General education requirements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

Substantive Change Restriction: Additional or different requirements for institutions meeting defined criteria. The criteria are defined in this policy and the additional or different

requirements are identified for each substantive change type. These restrictions and the criteria for which institutions are affected are required by federal regulations.

Teach-out: The process and time period of a teach-out plan.

(See also closure, teach-out agreement, and teach-out plan)

Teach-out plan: A written plan developed by an institution for students to complete their programs of study because it decided to end a program, off-campus instructional site, method of delivery, or to close the institution. A teach-out plan provides an orderly process, the equitable treatment of students, minimal disruption and additional costs to students, and covers all enrolled students regardless of their progress to completion.

(See also closure, teach-out, and teach-out agreement)

Teach-out agreement: An optional written agreement with an institution or entity under which students covered by a teach-out plan may complete their programs of study. A teach-out agreement may include student eligibility criteria, time limits, fee waivers, tuition parity, or other negotiated terms.

(See also closure, teach-out, and teach-out plan)

Appendix C: Summary of Recent Changes

- June 17, 2021: Multiple updates and revisions (in approximate order of appearance) –
 - Deleted the requirement for substantive changes submitted by institutions on reimbursement for federal financial aid program to secure approval from the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees (June or December) versus the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (year-round) when otherwise allowed by policy.
 - Added guidance on marketing, advertising, recruitment, and admissions related to substantive changes pending approval with reference to the related policy.
 - Retitled a substantive change type from “Institution, Program, or Location Acquisition” to “Acquisition.”
 - Revised the definition of “Acquisition.”
 - Revised the definition of “Merger / Consolidation.”
 - Revised guidance on implementation and reaffirmation cycles for acquisitions and for merger/consolidations.
 - Added a second criterion – an order from the USDE as defined in federal regulations – triggering an institutional contingency teach-out plan for institutions on provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs. This is reflected in the policy section and in the procedures section.
 - Added an additional condition – heightened cash monitoring – triggering an institutional contingency teach-out plan as mandated by federal regulation.
 - Clarified other USDE actions triggering an institutional contingency teach-out plan.
 - Revised the guidance on embedded associate degrees and specialist degrees for a level change approval.
 - Clarified off-campus instructional site by extensive review by approval method two (by reaffirmation).
 - Clarified the authority under which substantive change committee visits are authorized.
 - Removed the requirement to submit a financial aid audit in a prospectus for approval of an off-campus instructional site by extensive review (financial audits are still required but a financial aid audit is not).
 - Multiple clarifications and grammatical, typographical, and technical corrections.
- March 11, 2021: Multiple updates and revisions (in approximate order of appearance) –
 - Clarified in the policy statement that federal regulations prohibit agreements with non-title IV entities providing more than 50% of a program.
 - Removed the provision for institution's substantive change policy and procedures to be publicly available.
 - Clarified the implementation date provided by the institution at the time of submission is the *intended* implementation date (as opposed to the eventual actual implementation date).

Note: For major changes, a redline companion resource will be made available when feasible for at least two months after the change is made.



- Clarified the submission deadline for notifications and the submission deadline for closures.
 - Changed multiple uses of "the majority" to "50% or more" for precision and clarity.
 - Significantly expanded the content of Cooperative Academic Arrangements for title IV and for non-title IV entities.
 - Provided directions to submit certain data for an Institution Closure or for an Institutional Contingency Teach-out plan on SACSCOC-provided spreadsheet templates.
 - Clarified the language explaining what does not constitute a Dual Academic Award and is not prohibit by policy.
 - Defined a quantitative threshold for a program's method of delivery to qualify as a substantive change.
 - Added an omitted item for Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, for prospectuses for graduate programs.
 - Miscellaneous grammatical and typographical corrections.
- December 4, 2020: Major revision with almost all new or re-written content. Because almost all content is new or re-written, a redline version is not feasible. Training materials are available on the substantive change [webpage](#) on the SACSCOC website.

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