



OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

University Policy

Policy #1800

NOTIFYING THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS, COMMISSION ON COLLEGES (SACS/COC) OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

Responsible Oversight Executive: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date of Current Revision or Creation: September 1, 2009

A. PURPOSE

This policy outlines the requirements, procedures, and processes for coordinating timely and complete notification of substantive change to our regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACS/COC). In order to maintain the commitment undertaken by virtue of its membership in SACS/COC and its reaffirmation of accreditation, the University is required to demonstrate continuing compliance with the [Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#) (Attachment A) by adhering to all standards, requirements, policies and procedures associated with the definition and scope of a substantive change, [SACS/COC Policy for Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions](#) (Attachment B.)

B. AUTHORITY

[Virginia Code Section 23-9.2:3, as amended](#), grants authority to the Board of Visitors to establish rules and regulations for the institution. Section 6.01(a)(6) of the [Board of Visitors Bylaws](#) grants authority to the President to implement the policies and procedures of the Board relating to University operations.

[Board of Visitors Policy 1002, Major Goals of the University](#), outlines the major goals of the University including quality of academic programs (Goal 3) and identifies the University's commitment to a continual improvement process, allowing for "rigorous and regular evaluation of the quality, pertinence and effectiveness of academic and other University programs."

C. DEFINITIONS

Substantive Change - A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. (See [Table 1](#), below.) Source: SACS/COC.

Procedure One – SACS/COC procedure associated with a substantive change which requires SACS/COC notification and and approval prior to implementation. Changes under Procedure One require notification, a prospectus or application, and may involve an on-site visit. Source: SACS/COC.

Procedure Two – SACS/COC procedure associated with a substantive change which requires SACS/COC notification prior to implementation. Source: SACS/COC.

Procedure Three – SACS/COC procedure associated with Approval of a Consolidation/Merger. Source: SACS/COC.

Branch Campus - A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature; (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority. Source: SACS/COC.

Degree Completion Program – A program where the institution accepts or requires a substantial amount of transfer credit prior to entry and only the program major portion is offered.

Distance Learning - A formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may employ correspondence study, or audio, video, or computer technologies. Source: SACS/COC.

Level - SACS/COC's Level taxonomy categorizes institutions by the highest degree offered. Old Dominion University is designated as a Level VI institution: Offers four or more doctorate degrees.

Merger/Consolidation - The Commission on Colleges defines a consolidation as the combination or transfer of the assets of at least two distinct institutions (corporations) to that of a newly-formed institution (corporation), and defines a merger as the acquisition by one institution of another institution's assets. For the purposes of accreditation, consolidations and mergers are considered substantive changes requiring review by the Commission on Colleges. (Examples include: a senior college acquiring a junior college, a degree-granting institution acquiring a non-degree-granting institution, two junior or senior colleges consolidating to form a new institution, or an institution accredited by the Commission on Colleges merging with a non-accredited institution) Source: SACS/COC

Off-Campus Site – Campus location providing educational course and/or program offerings that is at a different address than the main campus location. Source: SACS/COC.

Program or Program of Study - A course of study leading to a formal award, e.g., degree, certificate.

SACS Accreditation Liaison - In the years between accreditation reviews, the Accreditation Liaison is responsible for ensuring the timely submission of annual institutional profiles and other reports as requested by the Commission. With the chief executive officer, the accreditation liaison is responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted to the Commission and for ensuring ongoing compliance with Commission standards, policies, and procedures beyond reaffirmation. During the Reaffirmation Cycle, the Liaison serves on the SACS/COC Reaffirmation Leadership Team and oversees all staffing aspects of the Reaffirmation process. Source: SACS/COC.

Teach-Out – The process by which the University provides instructional and academic support services to students enrolled at a site that has been closed and/or in a program that has been discontinued. The teach-out process often extends well beyond the closing of a site or program to allow time for enrolled students to complete their programs in a reasonable amount of time.

Teach-Out Agreement - A written agreement between accredited institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students if one of those institutions stops offering an educational program before all students enrolled in that program complete the program. Source: SACS/COC.

D. SCOPE

This policy applies to all University officers who can initiate, review, approve, and allocate resources to any changes, including those to academic and non-academic programs and activities, which may be considered a substantive change according to SACS/COC policy. Within academic areas, such changes can originate with individual or groups of faculty members, department committees, department chairs, deans and associate deans, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate, or any other area reporting to the Provost. (See Attachment C, [Old Dominion University Organization Chart](#)).

In those areas outside the Academic Affairs Division, potential substantive changes may arise in individual units, among supervisors in each area, executive management teams within Vice Presidential or Executive Director areas, or with the Vice Presidents/Executive Directors themselves. Further, the need for a potential substantive change may come to the attention of the President or those in his direct reporting line. (See Attachment C, [Old Dominion University Organization Chart](#)).

Each individual hereby designated is required to be familiar and comply with this policy.

E. POLICY STATEMENT

At the earliest stage of conceptualization, any potential change that could be deemed substantive, (as defined herein) must be submitted in writing via the applicable reporting line to the appropriate Provost/Vice President/Executive Director to the President as documented in section D. SCOPE, above, and section F. PROCEDURES, below. The Provost, Vice Presidents, Dean of Students and Chief Student Affairs Officer or President, will bring forward each potential substantive change to be discussed by the President's Cabinet. The Provost will subsequently notify the SACS/COC Accreditation Liaison as to the nature, scope, and proposed date of the potential change.

Members of the President's Cabinet will keep the Provost apprised regarding the continuing viability and progress toward implementation of the potential change to ensure timely notification to SACS/COC. The Provost and the SACS/COC Accreditation Liaison will oversee the process of preparing appropriate notification, in conjunction with those involved with the change, according to the requirements in *SACS/COC Policy Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions* and other related policy and accreditation documents maintained by SACS/COC.

All responsible University officers and faculty (as identified In D. SCOPE) will be notified of this policy and reminded annually regarding their responsibility for compliance. The President, Provost, Vice Presidents and Dean of Students and Chief Student Affairs Officer are responsible for their respective areas bringing forward any potential Substantive Changes under this policy. The Provost and SACS Accreditation Liaison will ensure that information regarding this policy,

associated resources available from SACS/COC, and answers to frequently asked questions are made available on the Provost's website.

F. PROCEDURES

1. At the earliest stage of conceptualization, any proposed change that could be deemed substantive according to SACS/COC policy must be submitted in writing to the Provost, appropriate Vice President, or Dean of Students and Chief Student Affairs Officer, as outlined above in Section E. These notifications must include: (a) title of the proposed change; (b) a brief description of the change including its scope; (c) responsible individual to act as contact; (d) tentative timeline for approval; and (e) earliest date possible for implementation. These preliminary notifications will be reviewed by the President's Cabinet.

The definition of Substantive Change and the applicable institutional notifications are codified in *SACS/COC Policy Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions*, Attachment B. Table 1 below lists the types of institutional changes which are considered to be substantive under this policy. [Substantive Change – Frequently Asked Questions](#) is contained in Attachment D, and [What is a Substantive Change and How Should It Be Handled](#) is contained in Attachment E.

Table 1: Types of Substantive Changes and Applicable SACS/COC Procedures
(Source: *SACS/COC Policy Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions, June 2009*)

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	1	Yes	12 months	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Expanding at current degree level (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>) ¹	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a branch campus (see definition of "branch campus" on p. 2 of this document)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating joint degrees with another institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program... (typically for workforce development) ...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	None
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified Prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs ¹	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified Prospectus
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School programs offered at the high school) ...					
...Student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
...Student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Student can obtain 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	None

Table 1: Types of Substantive Changes and Applicable SACS/COC Procedures (continued)

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites					
...Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution ²	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating distance learning...					
...Offering 50 percent or more of a program (Adding subsequent programs requires advance notification only for programs that are significant departures from the originally approved programs) ¹	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
...Offering 25-49 percent	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Offering 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	None
Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement
Initiating a merger / consolidation with another institution	3	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Relocating an off-campus instructional site	2	Yes	Prior to Implementation	No	Letter of notification
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the length of a program ³	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating degree completion Programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Closing an institution or program: (see Commission policy “Closing a Program or Institution”)					
...closing a program with internal teach-out protocol	2	Yes	Prior to implementation		Description of plan
... closing a program with a teach-out agreement with another institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation		Copy of teach out agreement
...closing an institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation		Description of plan

¹ a significant departure in program is one in which the proposed new program has no closely related counterpart among the previously approved programs in the curriculum. To determine if a new program is a “significant departure”, it is helpful to ask if the new program requires

* Numbers of new faculty? * Many new courses? * New library or other learning resources?
* New equipment or facilities? * A new resource base?

² significant changes in mission are those that lead to a fundamental shift in the nature of the institution, such as an institution that had offered only professional programs deciding to add general education offerings, or a technical college transforming itself into a comprehensive community college.

³ significant changes in program length are those with noticeable impact on the program’s completion time (e.g., increasing a baccalaureate degree from 124 hours to 150 hours).

2. If the proposed change is considered appropriate for internal development by the President's Cabinet, the Provost will instruct the SACS Accreditation Liaison to record in the SACS/COC CHANGE TRACKING DATABASE the title, description, date of approval for internal development, the name of the individual responsible for its development, anticipated approval date, and earliest possible implementation date. Individuals responsible for the proposed changes will be instructed to notify the Provost and the SACS Accreditation Liaison as well as their appropriate Vice President/Executive Director regarding the progress of the proposed change.

The anticipated earliest date of implementation will be recorded to ensure that adequate time exists for SACS notification, including the development of a Substantive Change Prospectus. Should the planned implementation date not allow for timely SACS notification, the implementation date will be adjusted to allow for timely notification to SACS.

3. The SACS Accreditation Liaison will regularly monitor and record the progress and outcomes of the proposed change in the SACS/COC CHANGE TRACKING DATABASE, including events associated with the University's established policies and procedures for internal and external review and approval for various changes at the University. Working with the Provost and other senior University officers, the SACS Accreditation Liaison will regularly contact the designated individuals responsible for each potential change to ensure that progress toward approval and implementation is carefully tracked.

When all internal reviews and approvals have been obtained, the President will send SACS/COC a written notification of the proposed change. Depending on the type of change and subsequent instructions from SACS/COC, the University may be required to submit a Substantive Change Prospectus and/or an Application for approval, within a minimum of three months and up to as many as 12 months prior to implementation of the change (per Table 1, above). From this point forward, for many types of changes, a minimum of 6 months is required to obtain formal approval by the University's Board of Visitors and the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV), if required.

4. When the University's Board of Visitors and the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) or the Virginia Governor's office have given final approval, as appropriate, the Provost will notify the SACS Accreditation Liaison to prepare SACS/COC a Prospectus or Application as appropriate. Implementation of the approved substantive change will occur no sooner than three months following submission of the prospectus or application to SACS/COC, where applicable.

G. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

H. RELATED INFORMATION

[SACS/COC Homepage](#)