



OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

University Policy

Policy #1800

NOTIFYING THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS COMMISSION ON COLLEGES (SACSCOC) OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

Responsible Oversight Executive: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date of Current Revision or Creation: May 10, 2022

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the requirements, procedures, and processes necessary to maintain compliance with the [Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#) with specific focus on coordinating timely and complete notification of substantive changes to the University's regional accrediting body, the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges \(SACSCOC\)](#).

B. AUTHORITY

[Code of Virginia Section 23.1-1301, as amended](#), grants authority to the Board of Visitors to make rules and policies concerning the institution. Section 7.01(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

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) – The body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices primarily among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and certain other international sites approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. The Commission also accepts applications for membership from domestic institutions in the other 39 states, as well as international institutions of higher education around the world.

Substantive Change - A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Such changes and the applicable institutional notifications are codified in [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#).

Branch Campus - A special form of off-campus instructional site that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution, where instruction is delivered. 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.

Degree Completion Program – A program for which the institution accepts or requires a substantial amount of transfer credit prior to entry and the primary offerings are in the program major.

Distance Learning - 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. A distance education course may employ correspondence study or audio, video, or computer technologies.

Level - SACSCOC'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 - SACSCOC 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 SACSCOC. (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 SACSCOC merging with a non-accredited institution.)

Off-Campus Site – Campus location geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus, and where instruction is delivered.

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

SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison – The individual at the institution who is responsible for ensuring the timely submission of annual institutional profiles and other reports as requested by the Commission in the years between accreditation reviews. With the President, the Accreditation Liaison is responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted to SACSCOC and for ensuring ongoing compliance with SACSCOC standards, policies, and procedures beyond reaffirmation. During the Reaffirmation Cycle, the Liaison serves on the SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership Team and oversees all staffing aspects of the Reaffirmation process.

Significant Departure – A program that is not clearly related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine whether a new program is a "significant departure," it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
- Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
- Will a significant number of new courses be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be required?

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.

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 that may be considered a substantive change according to [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#). 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 for Academic Affairs, Faculty Senate, or any other area reporting to the Provost. In units outside academic areas, substantive change actions may involve the allocation of resources from other divisions. Each individual hereby designated is required to comply with this policy.

E. POLICY STATEMENT

To maintain the commitment undertaken by virtue of its membership in SACSCOC, the University is required to demonstrate continuing compliance with the [Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#) by adhering to all standards, requirements, policies and procedures associated with the definition and scope of a substantive change and found in [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#).

The SACSCOC Policy is as follows:

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accredits an entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. It is responsible for reviewing all substantive changes that occur between an institution's decennial reviews to determine whether the change has affected the quality of the total institution and to assure the public that all aspects of the institution continue to meet defined standards.

The SACSCOC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. To maintain its recognition with the U.S. Department of Education, the SACSCOC has incorporated federal requirements into its substantive change policy and procedures. Some of those requirements specify that an institution seek and receive approval prior to the initiation of substantive change so that the change can be included in the institution's scope of accreditation.

Substantive changes include, but are not limited to:

- 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 increasing 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.

To ensure timely notification to SACSCOC, members of the Provost's staff will keep the Provost apprised of the continuing viability and progress toward implementation of the potential change. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison ("SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison") will oversee the process of preparing appropriate notification, in conjunction with those involved with the change, according to the requirements in [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#), and other related policy and accreditation documents maintained by SACSCOC.

All responsible University officers and faculty will be notified of this policy and reminded annually regarding their responsibility for compliance. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will provide information regarding this policy and associated resources available from SACSCOC.

F. PROCEDURES

1. All proposed changes must be submitted in writing to the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, during the early planning stage, 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 SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison or designee.
2. If the proposed change is considered substantive by the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, he or she will work with the designated individual(s) to develop documentation related to the change. The anticipated earliest date of implementation will be recorded to ensure that adequate time exists for SACSCOC notification, including the development of a Substantive Change Prospectus. Should the planned implementation date not allow for timely SACSCOC notification, the implementation date will be adjusted to allow for timely notification to SACSCOC.
 3. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will regularly monitor the progress and outcomes of the proposed changes with the Institutional Effectiveness & Accreditation Analyst, who develops the Substantive Change Prospectus. When the Substantive Change Prospectus is completed, the President will send SACSCOC a written notification of the proposed change.
 4. Implementation of the approved substantive change will occur no sooner than six months following submission of the prospectus or application to SACSCOC, where applicable.

G. RECORDS RETENTION

Applicable records are retained and then destroyed or transferred to the Old Dominion University Archives in accordance with the [Commonwealth's Records Retention Schedules](#). For Accreditation Records: Final Accreditation, use [General Schedule 111, Series 101132 – Permanent Retention](#)).

H. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison

I. RELATED INFORMATION

[Old Dominion University Organization Chart](#)
[Substantive Change – Frequently Asked Questions](#)
[What is a Substantive Change?](#)

