

USA Substantive Change Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires all accredited institutions to maintain a written substantive change policy. This policy must be formally approved through the institution's established governance processes and made accessible to both the university community and the general public.

The University is responsible for demonstrating compliance with its Substantive Change Policy during accreditation reviews, reporting activities, and other SACSCOC-related compliance processes.

Failure to comply with SACSCOC substantive change requirements may result in institutional actions imposed by SACSCOC, including placement on Substantive Change Restriction or, in severe cases, loss of accreditation.

2. Applicability

Maintaining accreditation is a shared institutional responsibility. All University units must notify the Institutional Accreditation Liaison of potential substantive changes as they arise. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to, Deans, Associate and Assistant Deans, Department Chairs, Program Directors, Program Coordinators, faculty, unit directors, and University administration.

3. Definitions

Institutional Accreditation Liaison (IAL): The individual designated by the University President to serve as the official point of contact with SACSCOC and to oversee compliance with accreditation requirements.

Substantive Change: 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.

4. Policy Guidelines

This policy affirms the University of South Alabama's commitment to reporting substantive changes that affect the institution's nature and scope in accordance with SACSCOC standards and applicable federal regulations.

4.1 SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison

The SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison (IAL) is responsible for ensuring the University's ongoing compliance with the *SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. This includes monitoring and reporting substantive changes, as well as providing educational training to help

University personnel recognize when to consult the policy or contact the IAL regarding a potential substantive change.

The IAL reviews proposed changes to determine whether they constitute a substantive change as defined by the *SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

When it is unclear whether a proposed change falls within the scope of the *SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*, the IAL or the University President will consult with the University's assigned SACSCOC staff member.

5. Procedures

5.1 Notification and Monitoring

Proposed institutional, academic, or operational changes should be communicated to the IAL as early as practicable, ideally no fewer than eighteen months prior to implementation. Early notification supports adequate review, planning, and compliance with accreditation timelines. As defined by SACSCOC policy, certain substantive changes require approval prior to implementation.

5.2 Review, Collaboration, and Submission

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness works in collaboration with the Office of Academic Affairs to monitor institutional changes, programmatic changes, instructional site or additional location changes, and other changes monitored by SACSCOC. The IAL participates in the University's curriculum approval workflow to review proposed changes and determine whether substantive change requirements apply.

When the IAL determines that a proposed change requires SACSCOC notification or approval, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness coordinates with the appropriate academic and administrative units to ensure that all applicable requirements are met and that submissions are prepared in a timely manner. All substantive change notifications and prospectuses are formally submitted to SACSCOC by the Institutional Accreditation Liaison.

5.3 Compliance Review

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness conducts an annual review of institutional activities to support ongoing compliance with SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures. When a substantive change is identified, the requesting unit works collaboratively with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to ensure that all applicable requirements are met.

5.4 Administrative Communication

The Institutional Accreditation Liaison provides ongoing updates to the Executive Vice President and Provost regarding substantive changes and related accreditation actions, as appropriate.

6. Enforcement

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for this policy and ensuring that University of South Alabama community members are aware of the policy guidelines.

7. Related Documents

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures - <https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/#subchangeopol>

Code of Federal Regulations: 34 C.F.R. § 602.22 Substantive changes and other reporting requirements
- <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-602/subpart-B/subject-group-ECFRa817aaaccb517f1/section-602.22>