

POL 02.05.01
Substantive Change Policy

Authority: Office of Academic Affairs

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Related Policies:

- [SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1](#)
- [SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges](#)
- [UNC Policy 400.1.1.2\[G\]-Guidelines for Alternative, Online, or Distance Education Delivery of Approved Degree Programs](#)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) accredits the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In order to maintain its accreditation, the university must remain in compliance with all Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and Federal Requirements contained in the *Principles of Accreditation*. Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1 on Substantive Change requires the University to notify the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission's substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes. Additionally, SACSCOC Policy Statement on "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges" requires that member institutions have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion.

2. SCOPE

2.1 The UNC Pembroke Policy on Substantive Change applies to all university personnel considering actions that modify significantly the nature and scope of the institution. All such personnel must understand and observe this policy. These personnel include, but are not limited to, all academic department program personnel (i.e., deans, department chairs, program directors, and faculty) who are considering offering programs at off-campus sites, initiating online learning programs, initiating a certificate program, initiating a degree completion program, adding a program that is a significant departure from current programs, increasing substantially the number of credit hours of a program, or initiating a program at a more advanced level (doctorate) or lower level (associate) than currently offered programs. It also includes all administrative personnel (i.e., chancellor, provost, vice chancellors, associate vice chancellors, and directors) who are involved with the initiation of a branch campus; the initiation of a merger or consolidation; altering significantly the educational mission of the institution; relocating a campus; closing a program, off-campus site, branch, or institution; or changing the governance, ownership,

control, or legal status of the institution. In addition, all university personnel responsible for the dispersal of federal financial aid that may be affected by any of the actions described above must also understand and observe this policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Substantive Change. A substantive change is defined as any significant modification of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.

4. POLICY STATEMENTS

4.1 Institutional Responsibilities

4.1.1 It is the policy of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke to comply with the substantive change policy and procedures of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC). In accordance with Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1 and SACSCOC Policy Statement on “Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges,” the university will notify the Commission of changes and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of such changes.

4.1.2 If UNC Pembroke fails to follow the Commission’s policy and procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its institutional accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. The university may also face the imposition of a sanction by SACSCOC, lose its Title IV funding, or be required to reimburse the U.S. Department of Education for money the university has received.

4.2 Commission Responsibilities

4.2.1 The 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.

4.2.2 The Commission 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 Commission 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 a substantive change so that the change can be included in the institution’s scope of accreditation.

5. PROCEDURES

5.1 Off-Campus and Online Courses and Programs

5.1.1 With the approval of the dean, department chairs wishing to offer programs and courses at off-campus sites or online will consult with the associate vice chancellor for academic planning and accreditation/SACSCOC Liaison (hereafter referred to as the Associate Vice Chancellor) and the director of distance education in the early stages of the planning process to determine the nature of the substantive change. The associate vice chancellor and the director of distance education will meet regularly to discuss departmental plans for off-campus or online offerings.

5.1.2 Department chairs will submit the [Notification of Intent to Offer Off-Campus or Online Courses and Programs](#) form to the associate vice chancellor and director of distance education at least six months prior to the anticipated date of offering. The forms will contain the signature of the dean indicating his/her approval of the proposed offerings.

5.1.3 Within ten business days of receiving the Notification of Intent form, the associate vice chancellor will notify the department chair to submit the [Request for Authorization to Offer Off-Campus or Online Courses and Programs](#). As specified on the form, the department chair must secure the signatures of the dean, director of distance education, director of financial aid, and provost before submitting the form to the associate vice chancellor. The Distance Education Planning Committee, consisting of the provost, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, associate vice chancellor (SACSCOC Liaison), associate vice chancellor for engaged outreach, and director of distance education, will review the request. The associate vice chancellor or the director of distance education will notify the department chair as to whether or not authorization is granted within fourteen business days of the receipt of the request. Department chairs will be responsible for ensuring the programs and courses are not offered at off-campus sites or online until the request for authorization is granted. Such requests will not be granted until approval from SACSCOC has been received when necessary.

5.1.4. The associate vice chancellor for academic planning and accreditation will serve as the institution's SACSCOC Liaison. The associate vice chancellor will notify SACSCOC of substantive changes requiring notification in accordance with required timelines and seek approval for changes prior to their implementation when necessary. In collaboration with academic departments, the liaison will prepare the prospectus, when required, and submit it to SACSCOC.

5.1.5 The SACSCOC Liaison will track the actions taken on each proposal from the point of consultation to SACSCOC notification and approval and will keep a record of all substantive changes approved by SACSCOC.

5.1.6 The director of distance education will work with the academic departments to prepare and submit the documentation required by UNC General Administration to secure its approval for new distance education programs (off-campus and online). Approval of new distance education programs must be obtained prior to securing approval from SACSCOC.

5.1.7 The associate vice chancellor will inform the director of financial aid of all substantive changes submitted to SACSCOC. The director of financial aid will modify the university's U.S. Department of Education Application for Approval to Participate in Federal Student Aid as necessary.

5.1.8 The director of distance education will review the schedule of classes as soon as it is available every semester to ensure that all courses being offered off-campus (designated by the 400 suffix in the Banner system) are a part of a program being offered at an off-campus site that has been approved by SACSCOC and UNC General Administration. The director will certify to the associate vice chancellor that the schedule contains no courses being offered at unapproved sites.

5.1.9 The director of distance education will maintain an Inventory of Approved Off-Campus Sites and Programs, which will be circulated to deans, department chairs, and program directors every semester. They will be asked to review the inventory, certify that it accurately reflects departmental off-campus and online offerings, and report any errors or omissions to the director of distance education. This will enable the university to better track off-campus and online offerings and avoid future failures to notify and seek approval prior to implementation.

5.2 Other Substantive Changes

5.2.1 Some changes will require academic departments to seek internal approval through the university's Curriculum Development and Revision Process. These include altering the length of a program, initiating courses or programs at a more advanced level or a lower level than currently offered, or adding a program that is a significant departure from current programs. In these cases, department chairs will notify the Office of Academic Affairs by submitting the Course Proposal and/or Program Proposal Forms to the provost for approval. The SACSCOC Liaison will receive these forms on behalf of the provost and will sign them on the provost's behalf.

5.2.2 For some changes that are typically initiated by administrative personnel rather than academic departments, personnel considering these changes will consult with the SACSCOC Liaison in the early stages of the planning process to determine the nature of the substantive change and the appropriate action required. These changes include but are not limited to the initiation of a branch campus; the initiation of a merger or consolidation; altering significantly the educational mission of the institution; relocating a campus; closing a program, off-campus site, branch, or institution; or changing the governance, ownership, control, or legal status of the institution. Administrative personnel involved with these changes will notify the SACSCOC Liaison by completing the Substantive Change Checklist. The associate vice chancellor will provide the checklist to the chancellor's executive cabinet (consisting of the provost/vice chancellor for academic affairs and the vice chancellors for advancement, business affairs, enrollment management, and student affairs) on a semester basis for them to complete for their division.

5.3. Substantive Change Workshops

5.3.1 The SACSCOC Liaison will provide on-going training and updated information on substantive change procedures for academic department personnel and university administrators at a workshop held at the beginning of the academic year. This is so as to increase awareness of what constitutes a substantive change and ensure that the appropriate approvals will be obtained at the campus level, the UNC system level, and from SACSCOC when required and prior to implementation of the substantive change.