

## Substantive Change Guidance

### Policies

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. The types of substantive change and the procedures for addressing them appropriately may be found in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) [Policy on Substantive Change](#). In addition, the College has authorized [APM 02-1104](#) to provide guidance on compliance with the substantive change procedures of SACSCOC. This policy is applicable to all units, departments, centers and campuses.

### Determining if a Substantive Change is Needed

The questions below will help determine if a substantive change is warranted. Does the change involve:

1. The development of a new degree or certificate program?
2. A contract, MOU, grant, or consortium for the development of all or part of a program, certificate, or course? (This applies whether the College is outsourcing instruction or our College is providing the instruction for another organization or company.)
3. Instruction of courses delivered by FSCJ instructors/employees at an off-campus location?
4. An increase or decrease in the total degree or certificate program hours by  $\geq 25\%$ ?
5. Switching the program from clock hours to credit hours or vice versa?
6. Opening a new college-owned campus, center, or new off-campus instructional site?
7. Adding or modifying coursework that requires new faculty, course content, equipment, facilities, library or other resources?
8. Inactivation of a degree or certificate program?
9. The relocation of an off-campus instructional site or a new site address?

If you answered YES to one or more of the questions above, please contact the OIE at [OIE@fscj.edu](mailto:OIE@fscj.edu) for information regarding SACSCOC approval of your potential substantive change. Use the timeframes listed below to determine when you should submit your proposed substantive change.

### Timeframe for Reporting

All substantive changes must be reported in a timely fashion to SACSCOC via the substantive change notification process. The following includes a list of examples of substantive change and the appropriate timeframe for notification to OIE. This is not a complete list of substantive changes but includes the most common examples. For a complete list, refer to the SACSCOC policy referenced above.

#### A Minimum of Three Months Prior to Implementation of Change

- Initiating an off-campus site where students can obtain 25-49% of credits/clock hours of any certificate/degree (including dual enrollment sites)
- Initiating programs/courses offered through cooperative academic arrangement or contractual instruction (*less than 25% of program*)
- Relocating an approved off-campus site

*A Minimum of Eight Months Prior to Implementation of Change*

- Initiating a previously approved degree or certificate program at a new off-campus site
- Altering significantly the length of a program (rule of thumb is increasing or decreasing the number of credit hours/clock hours by 25% or more)
- Initiating dual or joint degrees with another SACSCOC accredited institution
- Initiating programs/courses offered through cooperative academic arrangement or contractual instruction (*more than 25% of program*)

*A Minimum of Ten Months Prior to Implementation of Change*

- Initiating a new degree program
- Offering 50% or more of the credit hours/clock hours needed to complete any degree, certificate or diploma at an off-campus site for the first time
- Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution not accredited by SACSCOC
- Adding significantly different programs to the academic curriculum at the College
- Initiating a new branch campus
- Relocating a campus

*As Soon as a Decision to Pursue Change is Made*

- Inactivating (closing) a program with an internal teach-out plan\* or with another institution
- Reactivating a previously closed program
- Initiating a new off-campus site where students can obtain 24% or less of credits/clock hours of any certificate/degree
- Expanding program offerings at a previously approved off-campus site
- Initiating a certificate program using existing approved courses

*\*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 fifty 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 in advance of implementation.*

**FAQs and Helpful Points:**

- *What is a significant departure?* A program that is not closely 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 added to the curriculum?
  - Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
  - Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

- What should I consider a substantive change in my program modification? A good rule of thumb is increasing or decreasing the number of credit hours/clock hours by 25% or more. It's also important to determine if any of the above questions regarding "significant departure" are relevant, such as if 25% of the courses are being replaced, or if additional equipment, new faculty, or additional library, facilities or financial resources are needed.
- What is a 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. Examples include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, collaborative agreements with international institutions, and contractual instruction.
- What is a consortial relationship? A consortial relationship typically is one in which two or more institutions share in the responsibility of developing and delivering courses and programs that meet mutually agreed upon standards of academic quality.
  - Note: Notification of initiating program/courses delivered through contractual agreement or a consortium does not apply to articulation agreements with other institutions, clinical agreements, or internship agreements.
- What is a dual academic award? 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.
- What is a joint degree? A single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the two or more institutions awarding the degree to the student.
- What information must you provide as part of the teach-out plan for closing a program? SACSCOC must approve all program closures prior to implementation. The written plan must provide equitable treatment of students and must also include the following information:
  - Date of closure (date when new students will no longer be admitted)
  - An explanation of how affected parties (students, faculty, staff) will be informed of the impending closure
  - An explanation of how all affected students will be helped to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption
  - An indication as to whether the teach-out plan will incur additional charges/expenses to the students and, if so, how the students will be notified
  - Signed copies of teach-out agreements with other institutions, if any
  - How faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employment

### **Modifications and Inactivations - Curriculum Proposal Examples**

**Modification** – Responds to internally- or externally-driven changes by updating and keeping intact an existing program. Normally does not require notification to SACSCOC. If the curriculum proposal includes one or more of the following elements, the appropriate course of action may be a modification:

- Minor updates to course descriptions, pre/co-requisites, recommended texts, course topics/contact hours, faculty workload points, and/or learning outcomes
- Change to POS number, CIP code, and/or program title
- Minimal change to total program hours (<25%)
- Minimal addition of course content not already in College Catalog (<25% total program hours)

*Example 1 – Curriculum Proposal 2016-31, Updates to Digital Media/Multimedia Production A.S.*

Proposal restructures program and includes inactivation/removal of 14 courses, addition of 4 courses already in Catalog and addition of 3 courses new to Catalog (total of 15% new content). In addition, there were 3 course modifications which included updates to course descriptions, prerequisites, course topics/contact hours and learning outcomes. Proposal also includes updating CIP code. Total program hours changed from 64 to 60 credit hours, a 6% decrease. Proposal was initiated per the results of a program-level needs assessment. SACSCOC notification is not required.

*Example 2 – Curriculum Proposal 2016-17, Updates to Personal Lines Insurance W.C.*

Proposal includes updating program name and CIP Code. Total program hours changed from 52 to 60 contact hours, a 15% increase. In addition, includes update of course title, topic contact hours, and faculty workload points. Proposal was initiated per changes to FDOE framework. SACSCOC notification is not required.

**Inactivation** – Responds to internally- or externally-driven changes by formally closing one program that most often will not be replaced by another program. If there is a replacement program, significant differences between the two programs exist. Always requires approval from SACSCOC.

If the curriculum proposal includes one or more of the following elements, the appropriate course of action may be an inactivation

- Program is being eliminated, either by internal or external direction, and is not being replaced by another program
- Change to POS number, CIP code, and/or program title
- Significant addition of course content not already in College Catalog (>25% total program hours)
- Significant change in total program hours between old and new programs (>25%)
- Significant differences in learning outcomes between old and new programs

FSCJ identifies an effective term of inactivation as the term in which students who are admitted to the College prior to and equal to the effective term can select the inactivated program of study. The term following the effective term of inactivation begins the phase of no longer permitting students into the inactivated program of study. For example, if the effective term for inactivation is fall 2017, the term in which students can no longer be admitted would be spring 2018.

SACSCOC approval to close a program must occur prior to or during the effective term of inactivation. For example, if the effective term for inactivation is fall 2021, SACSCOC notification must occur no later than fall 2021.

*Example 1 – Curriculum Proposal 2016-31, Inactivation of Digital Media/Multimedia Video Production T.C.*

Proposal initiates inactivation of program, which will not be replaced by a separate program. Additional inactivation paperwork is required, as is formal approval to inactivate the program from SACSCOC. The decision to inactivate the program was a result of a program-level needs assessment.

*Example 2 – Curriculum Proposal 2015-68, Inactivation of Aviation Maintenance Management A.S.*

Proposal initiates inactivation of Aviation Maintenance Management A.S. and creation of replacement program, Aviation Maintenance Administration A.S. Proposal was initiated per changes to FDOE framework. There is a change in total program hours from 83 to 60, a 27% decrease. Additional inactivation paperwork is required, as is formal approval from SACSCOC to inactivate the program.