

# TEXAS A&M INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

FOR THE SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS COMMISSION ON COLLEGES (SACSCOC)

May 2023

#### **Substantive Change Policy and Procedures**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires its member institutions to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion. Texas A&M International University as an accredited member institution adheres to the Commission's substantive change policy. The *Principles of Accreditation* (2018) states the requirement for an institution to comply with Standard 14.2 which reads as follows:

The institution has a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported in accordance with SACSCOC policy.

#### **University Policy Statement**

Texas A&M International University will report in writing any actions defined as a substantive change to the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). This policy and procedure statement sets forth the steps and requirements to monitor and report substantive changes occurring at Texas A&M International University. Substantive change submissions are based on the concept of "significant departures" from previously approved programs, off-campus instructional sites or mode of delivery as well as a change in institutional scope. The Associate Provost who coordinates academic program approvals will work with the Accreditation Liaison to ensure accurate reporting to SACSCOC. This policy statement is published on the university's website. It will be reviewed on an annual basis, updated as needed, and distributed widely.

#### **Institutional Accreditation Liaison**

The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is responsible for ensuring that all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC. The Accreditation Liaison serves as the gatekeeper and advisor for the substantive change process and will consult as needed with the university's Provost or designee. The Accreditation Liaison is an ex-officio member of the University Curriculum Committee and should review all program change submissions prior to or during the curriculum/program approval process. All questions regarding possible substantive change actions, should be directed to the institution's SACSCOC Liaison for guidance.

#### **Definition**

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive changes include high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services. The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy can be viewed on the SACSCOC website.

https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf.

#### **Types of Substantive Change**

The different types of substantive change and the specific procedure to be used for each, are briefly described in the Substantive Change Worksheet (see Attachment I). The worksheets are to be completed by the academic program coordinator or department chair as part of the curriculum approval process.

These forms will assist both the proposer and the SACSCOC Liaison in determining what level of SACSCOC interaction will be necessary.

#### **Institutional Changes**

If any of the substantive changes are at the institutional level, the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs will consult with the institution's SACSCOC Liaison for guidance in seeking SACSCOC approval.

#### **Submission deadlines**

Substantive change documentation submission deadlines depend on (1) the type of SACSCOC Board of Trustees review, if required, and (2) the intended implementation date of the substantive change.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees (which meets biannually), to be implemented after the date of the Board meeting, the submission deadlines are:

- March 15 for review at the Board's biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year, and
- **September 1** for review at the Board's biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the SACSCOC Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (which meets year-round), the submission deadlines are

- **January 1** for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year, and
- **July 1** for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

#### **Implementation of Substantive Changes**

<u>Notifications</u>: Substantive changes requiring "notification only" can be submitted any time before implementation. Once the institution has submitted notification, it may implement before receiving a response from SACSCOC. If there are deficiencies or if additional information is needed about the notification, SACSCOC will contact the Accreditation Liaison for resolution of the issue.

<u>Approvals</u>: Changes requiring SACSCOC approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

For a substantive change to close a program, a site, a program at a site, or a method of delivery, a teach-out plan must be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to stop admitting students.

#### **Designated Responsibility**

The institutional Accreditation Liaison is responsible for timely reporting of a substantive change to SACSCOC in accordance with the requirements of the policy. It is the responsibility of the Accreditation Liaison to keep the institution informed of any changes by SACSCOC in the substantive change policy or in the university's process for handling substantive changes.

Each university unit is responsible for informing the Accreditation Liaison of any potential substantive

changes in a manner that ensures the institution can meet the required notification, review, and approval processes for SACSCOC. For academic program activities, the SACSCOC substantive change report should be the last approval after any required approvals from the Texas A&M University System Office and the Texas Coordinating Board for Colleges and Universities.

#### **University Procedures**

**Procedures for Implementation:** Academic program changes must follow the university's curriculum approval process. Course and program additions and revisions must first be approved by a department's curriculum committee, a college's curriculum committee, and the university curriculum committee while along the way getting the approval of the department chair, the college dean, and, finally, the provost. From the beginning of a degree proposal or program change, the department chair or college dean must consult with both the Provost and VPAA as well as the Accreditation Liaison. The steps in the process follow below.

The academic or administrative officer or unit initiating the substantive change will:

- 1. Contact the Accreditation Liaison to determine if potential program changes could result in a substantive change report.
- 2. If the Accreditation Liaison determines that the change requires a substantive change submission to SACSCOC, then the academic officer will collect the necessary documentation and submit it to the Office of the Provost and to the Accreditation Liaison via the Substantive Change Request form (Attachment II).
- 3. If the substantive change involves a major change to a degree program (including the closing of a program) or a proposal for a new degree program, then the department follows the university's curriculum approval process concurrently with assembling documentation needed for submission of the substantive change to SACSCOC.
- 4. Because SACSCOC substantive change approvals (as opposed to "notifications") require up to six months, curriculum changes and additions that require approvals both of the university curriculum process (and possibly from TAMUS and THECB) as well as SACSCOC -- because of this lengthy process, these changes and additions should be submitted as early in the fall semester as possible (e.g., early September) and should not be planned for implementation until the next academic year, at the earliest.
- 5. The academic unit administrator (program coordinator, chair, or dean) submitting the program change that requires a substantive change should work with the Accreditation Liaison to prepare and submit the required Letter of Notification and/or program change prospectus document for SACSCOC approval.
- 6. The college dean of the program requiring a substantive change is responsible for paying from either college or department accounts the SACSCOC invoice for processing the request, a cost that varies currently up to a maximum of \$500.

#### The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will:

1. Attend all meetings of the University Curriculum Committee and review all program changes to ensure that a change requiring either notification to or approval of SACSCOC as a substantive change is re-routed through the university's "Procedures for Implementation" enumerated above. 4

- 2. Review the Substantive Change Request Form for completeness, appropriateness and consistency with SACSCOC policies and standards. The liaison will work with an initiator as needed to address any deficits. Upon completion of this review, the liaison forwards the substantive change request to the Office of the Provost for review and approval.
- 3. Work with initiators on approved requests to prepare any necessary documentation including a letter of notification and/or prospectus document and compile other documentation to ensure all relevant SACSCOC policies and standards are addressed and submitted in the necessary timeframe.
- 4. Track changes to the Principles of Accreditation and disseminate changes to the University community and coordinate the reporting and completion of required SACSCOC activities.
- 5. Update the university's substantive change policy and procedures as needed based on SACSCOC policy.
- 6. Annually present the substantive change policy and any other SACSCOC accreditation updates to Executive Council and other relevant groups to ensure the policy and other accreditation information is widely disseminated.

#### The Provost or designee will:

- 1. Review the Substantive Change Request Form and approve the substantive change or may request additional information from the initiating unit.
- 2. With the assistance of the Accreditation Liaison, the initiating unit will prepare the SACSCOC substantive change request document (prospectus or letter of notification) and supporting documentation.
- 3. The Accreditation Liaison will prepare the formal transmission to SACSCOC and send hard copy or upload electronic submissions into the Institution Portal as determined by SACSCOC.
- 4. All correspondence to SACSCOC is submitted through the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison or the university President's Office.
- 5. The Accreditation Liaison will track SACSCOC actions related to substantive change requests submitted.
- 6. The Accreditation Liaison will notify all appropriate parties of any updates and the final decision.

#### **Annual Review and Dissemination of the Policy**

The Provost (via the Accreditation Liaison) will distribute (electronic and/or paper) the *University Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* statement to all academic and administrative officers annually. Additionally, the "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Policy" will be posted on the university substantive change webpage.

The SACSCOC policy, procedures and related documents will be reviewed annually by the Accreditation Liaison and all members of the University Executive Council. The university's policy statement will be updated as needed to ensure current information is disseminated to maintain continuing compliance with the *Substantive Change Policy for Accredited Institutions of the* 

Commission on Colleges. The Accreditation Liaison will annually present the university's Substantive Change Policy Procedures statement to all appropriate university constituencies. If more frequent updates are required, the Accreditation Liaison will inform each constituency group. Each unit head will be asked to verify receipt of the university's substantive change information.

### Program or Off-Campus Location Closure/Suspension Procedures and Teach-out Plans

#### **SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy: Closing a Program**

If an institution decides to close an educational program, SACSCOC must be notified in advance of the closure. If a program is being closed, a teach-out plan must be submitted and approved by SACSCOC prior to implementation. If the plan includes teach-out agreement(s) with other institutions, then the agreement(s) must also be approved prior to implementation. SACSCOC no longer suspends academic programs; they are either closed or open. A closed program may re-open if it is within five years of the date that the program stopped admitting students into the program.

<u>From SACSCOC Good Practices for Closing a Program</u>: "When the decision is made to close an educational program, the institution must make a good faith effort to assist affected students, faculty, and administrative and support staff so that they experience a minimal amount of disruption in the pursuit of their course of study or professional careers. In all cases, individuals should be notified of the decision to close a program as soon as possible so that they can make appropriate plans. Students who have not completed their programs should be advised by faculty or professional counselors regarding suitable options, including transfer to comparable programs. Arrangements should be made to reassign faculty and staff or assist them in locating other employment."

- See the SACSCOC website for more information on teach-out plans or substantive change reporting: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf
- See also the SACSCOC "Closing a Program, Site, Branch or Institution: Good Practices" document: https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/CloseProgramSite.pdf

#### SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy: Closing a Program at an Off-Campus Instructional Site

An off-campus instructional site is a location geographically apart from the main campus at which 50% or more of the credit for at least one program is offered. Such sites must be approved in advance by SACSCOC.

If an institution decides to close an off-campus site that provides 50% of at least one program, SACSCOC must be notified. In addition, if a program at an off-campus site is closed, SACSCOC must be notified in advance of the closure. All closure approvals require an acceptable teach-out plan to be submitted to ensure students have reasonable opportunities to complete their program of study with minimal disruption and additional costs. See section III below for more information.

If closing an off-campus instructional site, consult SACSCOC document "Good Practices for Closing a Program" https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/CloseProgramSite.pdf.

#### Texas A&M International University Procedures for Closing a Program

When programs anticipate either temporarily stopping admissions or permanently closing a program, the

Provost's Office must first be consulted. The program closure must be approved through the curriculum approval process, which requires that the chair, dean, and provost approve of the change as well as the faculty curriculum committees. Once this has happened, the dean in consultation with the program chair and faculty, then prepares a "teach-out" plan. The plan must be approved by the Provost prior to submission to SACSCOC. The plan must follow SACSCOC guidelines found in "Good Practices: *Closing a Program, Site, Branch or Institution*" located here: <a href="https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/CloseProgramSite.pdf">https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/CloseProgramSite.pdf</a>

#### Related Statutes, Policies, Regulations, or Rules

- System Policy 11.10, Academic Program Requests
- System Policy 11.03, Shortened Courses
- Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Sub-Chapter Q, §4.272
- TAMIU SAP 11.03.99.L0.01, Shortened Courses

#### **Definitions**

"Curricula:" "curriculum," and "program" may refer to academic programs, including courses, degrees, and certificates. At TAMIU, an academic program is defined as a degree authorized by the Texas Coordinating Board or a certificate awarded by the university.

"Minor change" may be a modification to existing courses or degree plans not involving major changes to course or degree content, course or degree prerequisites, or course or degree credit hours.

"Substantive change" is defined by SACSCOC as a "significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution." Additional information for guidance on necessary approvals and notification may be found on the websites for The Texas A&M University System, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (see links under Appendix).

#### **Appendix**

Additional information for guidance on necessary approvals and notification may be found at:

The Texas A&M University System - Academic Planning & Policy

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement

#### **Contact Office**

Associate Vice President for Assessment, Research and Planning, 956-326-2276

# Attachment I Substantive Change Worksheet

Academic Program:							
Proposed Implementation Date:							
New P	Program						
This p	This program will have 25-49% new content*  Notification required			☐ YES			
This p	rogram will have 50-100% new content*	Approval required	□ NO	□ YES			
This program will be at a <b>new instructional level</b> (e.g., moving from bachelor to master level coursework)  Approval required		□ NO	□ YES				
	Percent of new courses being developed for program (not Gen Ed)?		%				
	If 50% or more new courses being added, what percent of those courses have NEW CONTENT?		%				
*New o	content is defined as academic content not previously taught in this program, at the	ne current degree level, or a	at the Univ	ersity			
Progra	am Length Change		ı				
	This program will increase or decrease credit hours by 25% or more		□ NO	☐ YES			
AND	The increase/decrease in program length will change the expected time to completion for students by more than one term	Approval required	□ NO	□ YES			
	lethod of Instructional Delivery		ı				
A new method of instructional delivery* is being added to the existing program  * Methods of delivery are Competency-based, distance education, or face-to-face		Notification required	□ NO	□ YES			
Re-O	pening a Program	Date program closed:					
Admis	sions to program closed for less than 5 years	Notification required	□ NO	□ YES			
Admissions to program closed for <b>5 years or longer</b> Note: Programs closed 5 years or longer are considered NEW programs  Approval required.		Approval required	□ NO	□ YES			
Closin	ng a Program		1				
	ogram is being closed for entry/admissions at all locations and methods of delivery	Approval Required	□ NO	□ YES			
	erative Academic Arrangement – Title IV Entity	T	T				
This program will have a cooperative agreement with a <b>title IV certified entity where</b> 50% or more of the program is offered through this arrangement  Notification required		□ NO	□ YES				
This program is dependent on the entity to deliver this program		Notification required	□ NO	□ YES			
	erative Academic Arrangement – NON-Title IV Entity		ı	1			
This program will have a cooperative agreement with an <b>entity that is not certified for Title IV</b> to deliver less than 25% of the program content  Notification require		Notification required	□ NO	□ YES			
This program will have a cooperative agreement with an <b>entity that is not certified for Title IV</b> to deliver 25-50% of the program content  Approval required		Approval required	□ NO	□ YES			
Joint Academic Awards							
This p	rogram will award a joint degree with another SACSCOC institution	Notification required	□ NO	☐ YES			
	rogram will award a joint degree with a non-SACSCOC institution or entity	Approval required	□ NO	□ YES			
	Academic Award	l .	T				
curricu	ogram allows students to receive instruction and two or more institutions in prescribed la leading to each institution granting academic awards at the same credential level	Notification required	□ NO	□ YES			
	am Designed for Prior Learning		1				
This program will require students to possess prior learning experience as a condition of admission  Notification required		□ NO	□ YES				
Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment							

# Off-Campus Instructional Site/Additional Location Changes

Off-campus Instructional Site:							
Proposed Implementation Date:							
Off-campus Instructional Site Notification – 25-49% Program Delivery							
Off-campus instructional site at which <b>25-49% of a program's instruction* is delivered</b> *Instruction at a site may cross the 25% notification threshold any time after the institution submits notification	Notification required	NO	YES				
Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (Including Branch Campus) – 50% or more Program Delivery							
Off-campus instructional site* at which <b>50% or more of a program's instruction is delivered</b> *An off-campus instructional site <i>may</i> qualify as a branch campus; refer to definitions	Approval required	□NO	YES				
Fewer than two off-campus sites already approved under the extensive review criteria AND/OR institution is on substantive change restriction	Approval Path 1: Extensive Review	NO	YES				
Two or more off-campus sites already approved under the extensive review criteria AND institution is NOT on substantive change restriction	Approval Path 2: Limited Review	NO	YES				
Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation*							
Relocating* an off-campus site that is NOT a branch campus	Notification required	NO	YES				
Relocating* an off-campus site that IS a branch campus	Approval required	NO	YES				
*Note: To be considered relocation, the new location must serve the same geographic area or same pool of students; instruction cannot overlap at current and new locations; and the change cannot result in a net change in the number of off-campus instructional sites. If the new location is an existing off-campus instructional site, moving is not considered relocation and is instead considered a closure of the current location (see Off-campus Instructional Site Closure section below).							
Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change							
Changing the name (must be unique and can only include "branch" or "branch campus" if the site has been approved as a branch by SACSCOC) or the address when the location remains the same (e.g., renaming a street, changing a zip code) of an off-campus site	Notification required	NO	YES				
Off-campus Instructional Site Closure							
All closures (notified sites and approved sites) require SACSCOC approval AND an acceptable teach-out plan. A site is considered closed as of the date the institution stops admitting students to the site (not the date of last instruction).	Approval required, Teach-out Plan required	□NO	YES				
Off-campus Instructional Site Re-open (Within 5 Years)							
A site previously approved for closure <b>may be re-opened within five years of the closure date</b> (the date the site was closed to admission) by submitting notification.	Notification required	□NO	YES				

# **Attachment II**

# **Texas A&M International University**

# **Substantive Change Request Form**

Subs	tantive Change Initiator:	Title:			
Check type of Substantive Change to be Initiated below:		Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC:			
	Initiating a branch campus *	6 months			
	Initiating a certificate program - using existing approved courses	N/A			
	Initiating a certificate program - at a new off-campus site *	Approval required prior			
	Initiating a certificate program -significant departure from previously approved programs *	to implementation  Approval required prior to implementation			
	Initiating other certificate programs - using existing approved courses	N/A			
	Initiating other certificate programs - at a new off-campus site *	6 months			
	Initiating other certificate programs -significant departure from previously approved programs *	6 months			
	Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution *	6 months			
	Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution - Accredited by SACSCOC	Prior to implementation			
	Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution - Not accredited by SACSCOC *	6 months			
	Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution - Dual programs *	Prior to implementation			
	Initiating off-campus sites - 50% or more credits toward program *	6 months			
	Initiating off-campus sites - 25-49% of credit	Prior to implementation			
	Initiating off-campus sites - 24% or less credit	N/A			
□ site	Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites - significant departure (at the	Prior to implementation			
	Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites - NOT significant departure	N/A			
	Altering significantly the length of a program *	6 months			
	Initiating distance learning - offering 50% or more of a program for the first time*	6 months			
	Initiating distance learning - offering 25-49% of program	Prior to implementation			
	Initiating distance learning - offering 24% or less of program	N/A			
	Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	Prior to implementation			
Ent	ering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs:  25% or more of program offered by COC accredited Institution *	6 months			
	less than 25% of program offered by COC accredited Institution	6 months			
	Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution *	6 months			
	Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution * 6 months				

□ Cl	hanging governance, ownership, control, or legal status	s of an institution *	6 months
□ Re	elocating a main or branch campus *		6 months
	Ioving an off-campus instructional site		Prior to implementation
	hanging from clock hours to credit hours *		6 months
□ A	ltering significantly the length of a program *		6 months
□ In	itiating degree completion programs *		6 months
its own	its own		teach-out Immediately following decision to close
	udents		
	losing a program, approved off-campus site, branch ca ontract with another institution to teach-out students (T		Immediately following decision to close
□ A	cquiring any program or site from another institution *		6 months
□ A	dding a permanent location at a siteanother institution	on that is closing *	6 months
* Prosp	pectus Report Required		
	of Expected Implementation		
Submi Only)	ission to SACS/COC (Provost Office Use		
		Not Approved	Exempt or Not Applicable (N/A)
Comm	nent:		
lignatu	ires:		
Initiator		 Date	
Initiator  Dean		Date Date	

If the substantive change request is approved, the accreditation liaison with notify the initiator of next

steps, which may be a request for 1) a letter of notification or 2) the prospectus report. The liaison will coordinate the submission of all materials to SACS/COC and any required follow-up reporting.

Print and complete this form. Send to:

Dr. Robert Wilkinson
Associate Vice President for Assessment, Research and Planning
SACSCOC Liaison
Texas A&M International University
5201 University Blvd.
Sue and Radcliffe Killam Library, 333
Laredo, Texas 78041
956-326-2276

# Workflow



# **SACSCOC Substantive Change** Workflow for Initiating a

Submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) to Associate Provost and the SACSCOC Liaison, including any System and/or CB approvals, as

Collect the substantive change evidence necessary to submit to SACSCOC

SACSCOC approval. The fee varies up to \$500.00

Contact

Substantive change prospectus, application, and notification submission deadlines depend on (1) the type of SACSCOC Board of Trustees review, if required, and (2) the intended implementation date of the substantive change. Most substantive changes require submissions 6 months prior to implementation. Please refer to OIARP for submission due dates.