



TEXAS A&M **INTERNATIONAL** UNIVERSITY

## **Substantive Change Policy and Procedures**

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## **Introduction**

Changes to university functioning, academic programs, and curricula are a primary aspect of higher education. Scientific advancements, the evolution of academic programs, and changes in the job market all push towards necessary changes in universities and their programs. All programs have been initially approved by universities, possibly system offices, state boards of education, accrediting bodies, and, in some instances, the federal government. If a program changes too much, it necessarily no longer reflects what was originally approved. This is the essence of substantive changes, the focus of this policy.

For new programs and programs changes that are deemed “substantive,” faculty will likely need to go through several external bodies for the program to gain full approval (or reapproval). Substantive changes 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.

Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) will report in writing any actions defined as a substantive change to the Texas A&M System Board of Regents, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

This policy sets forth the steps and requirements to monitor and report substantive changes occurring at TAMIU. The Associate Provost who coordinates academic program approvals will work with the Accreditation Liaison to ensure accurate reporting of substantive changes to the appropriate external body (Texas A&M System Board of Regents, THECB, and SACSCOC). This policy statement is published on the university’s website and will be reviewed on an annual basis, updated as needed, and distributed widely.

This policy is organized as follows. First, substantive changes are examined by the guidance provided by THECB and SACSCOC. Following this, TAMIU’s definition and mechanisms for identifying substantive changes are outlined. The policy then outlines the various types of substantive changes at TAMIU with an emphasis on program closures and new academic programs. Third, this policy then outlines the procedures, process, and workflow of how substantive changes are treated at TAMIU. The policy then identifies those responsible for transmission of substantive changes to the appropriate external bodies and the key timelines associated with the processing of substantive changes. Finally, this policy outlines the annual review of substantive changes that have been processed and the annual updating of this policy.

## **Substantive Changes According to THECB**

The determination of whether a proposed degree program consists of 50% or more new content is made by the institution in preparing the degree program proposal and should align with the

50% new content guidelines provided by SACSCOC (see more below). Table 1 provides the types of changes identified by the THECB that are most likely to be substantive in nature.

**Table 1. THECB Substantive Changes**

<b>Type of Change</b>	<b>Characteristics of the Change</b>
New Program	New Program comprised of 50% or more new content
Program Name	Associated with other changes to the program
CIP Code Change	Changes degree designator CIP code and title change in tandem
Degree Designation	Focus/purpose changes Completion requirements change Employment opportunities for graduates would change
Administrative Unit	Focus/purpose changes Completion requirements change Employment opportunities for graduates would change
Faculty	New faculty required New areas of expertise needed - Past three years or coming three years Existing faculty reassigned or terminated
Employment Opportunities	Graduates either lose or gain potential job opportunities
Specialization/Tracks	More than three new required courses added to a track Increase in semester credit hours
Accreditation, licensure, certification	New accreditation required by program change New licensure becomes available to graduates due to change
Objective/Mission Statement	Change to scope of the program

### **Substantive Changes According to SACSCOC**

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 (2024)* 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.*

According to SACSCOC, a substantive change includes a “significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.”

## **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>.

The TAMIU Standard Administrative Procedure (SAP) can be found at: <https://www.tamtu.edu/compliance/11.10.99.10.01substantivechanges.pdf>

## **Types of Substantive Changes**

There are different types of substantive changes: Institutional and Program/Curricular, Off-Campus Instructional Site/Additional Location Changes. Institutional changes are typically initiated by the administrators.

Institutional substantive changes include:

1. Acquisition
2. 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.
3. Competency-based education (CBE) by course/credit-based approach-Institutional-level Approval
4. Distance Education-Institutional-level approval
5. Changing the governance of an institution.
6. Institutional Closure
7. Institutional Relocation
8. Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan
9. Level Classification and Level Authorization
  - a. Definitions and Guidelines
  - b. Level Authorization Addition
  - c. Level Authorization Removal
  - d. Level Change to a Higher Level

e. Level Change to a Lower Level

10. Merger / Consolidation
11. Changing the established mission
12. Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change
13. Prison Education Program-Institutional-level approval

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 in addition to any curricular changes that might be required through the normal TAMIU curricular process. See Substantive Change Process below.

Program/Curricular changes include:

1. Clock-Credit Hour Conversion
2. Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval
3. Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Notification
4. Cooperative Academic Arrangements
  - a. Definitions and Guidelines
  - b. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities
  - c. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval
  - d. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification
5. Correspondence Education
6. Dual Academic Award
7. Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)
8. Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution(s)
9. Method of Delivery – Approval
10. Method of Delivery – Notification
11. New Program – Approval
12. New Program – Notification
13. Program Closure
14. Program Designed for Prior Learning – Approval
15. Program Designed for Prior Learning – Notification
16. Program Length Change

For new programs, if a change has 25% new content, it is a substantive change. There are two tiers of substantive changes under this rubric: 25-49% and 50%+. Any changes of 25% are a substantive change and require notification to SACSCOC. Substantive changes falling between 25-49% are lower-level substantive changes and any substantive changes 50% or greater new content are the more extensive substantive changes. The next section will outline how TAMIU deals with these percentages. For now, the important part about this distinction is how SACSCOC will be informed and their level of engagement with a substantive change at TAMIU. The SACSCOC liaison will be responsible for determining which kind of SACSCOC review is necessary during the program

proposal development phase of the curricular process; faculty do not make this determination but can discuss and present a case at the appropriate time in the process outlined below.

Based on the nature of the substantive change (25-49% or 50%+), SACSCOC requires either a full prospectus/proposal or a notification. Changes that require a full prospectus indicate significant changes from existing programs and coursework already in existence at TAMIU; in these instances, there are over 50% of changes to the underlying course content of a program that is comprised of new content. Existing programs that change content may rise to the level of a substantive change if either 25-49% or 50%+ of the content changes. This can occur in one curricular cycle or across academic years. TAMIU tracks both scenarios to ensure substantive changes are properly tracked and transmitted to SACSCOC. To be clear, this does not include a reorganization of current content in the program. Thus, new programs will often be substantive changes and will require a full prospectus delineating the nature of the changes. (See the discussion below for the requirements to the prospectus under the Substantive Changes at TAMIU section).

Another common program change is program closures, and these are always a substantive change. For substantive changes that include closing a program, site, program at a site, or changing the method of delivery, a Teach-Out plan must be developed as soon as the decision is made to close and stop admitting students (See the discussion below for the requirements of closing programs under Program Closures at TAMIU).

For a substantive change requiring notification only, such notification can be submitted any time before implementation. Once the institution has submitted a notification, it may implement the change before receiving a response from SACSCOC. If there are deficiencies or additional information required regarding the notification, the SACSCOC liaison will be contacted at the time of review for resolution and before action is taken. This applies to notifications only and not to approvals: changes requiring approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

For SACSCOC, non-substantive changes include but are not limited to repackaging of existing curricula into new programs, minors, or certificates. Repackaging includes taking existing courses and redistributing the content into courses with new course numbers and descriptions and minor changes to existing courses or degrees.

Off-campus Instructional Site/Additional location changes include:

1. Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines
2. Off-campus Instructional Site Notification
3. Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus)
  - a. Extensive Review
  - b. Limited Review
  - c. Committee Visits
4. Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation

- a. Definitions and Guidelines
  - b. Non-branch Campus
  - c. Branch Campus
5. Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change
6. Off-campus Instructional Site Closure
7. Off-campus Instructional Site Re-open

Other Changes include:

1. Implementation Extension
2. Substantive Change Restriction
3. Committee Visits
4. International Off-campus Instructional Sites
5. Fees and other expenses

### **Substantive Changes at TAMIU**

Based on THECB and SACSCOC, Texas A&M International University defines substantive changes as:

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.

This is the verbatim definition provided by SACSCOC and guides TAMIU in its processing of substantive changes.

In general, program closures will always trigger a substantive change review. An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change. New programs will mostly trigger substantive change reviews. All other potential substantial changes are identified using the 25-49% framework outlined by SACSCOC. In principle, this framework suggests if 25-49% of a program is using brand new content or more semester credit hours (SCH), then a substantive change is present; for SCH this percentage can be calculated based on new SCH within the overall major's total SCH. As will be illustrated further below, the arbiters of the percentage framework will be the SACSCOC Liaison in consultation with the Office of the Provost.

A few items are considered not substantive changes at TAMIU based on this policy. First, a program that goes from a thesis option to a non-thesis option in a master's program is not a substantive change. Second, if a program is not currently at the 120 SCH mark, but moves in that direction, it is not a substantive change. Finally, new certificates are not substantive changes, but both the THECB and SACSCOC will require notification.

Curriculum substantive changes are the most common types of changes at TAMIU. These include changes to programs that are more extensive and “significant departures” from previously approved programs. Program/Curricular changes include:

1. Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
2. Adding undergraduate programs at the bachelor level (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials).
3. Adding graduate programs at the masters or doctoral levels (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials).
4. 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.
5. Initiating programs by distance education (online).
6. Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
7. Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
8. 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.
9. Adding competency-based education programs.
10. Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
11. Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student’s prior or existing knowledge or competency.
12. Awarding dual or joint academic awards.

### **New Program Prospectus Requirements**

Required components of the prospectus include:

1. Cover letter signed by the SACSCOC Liaison
2. List of programs offered by the institution (excerpt from the catalog or a printout of a webpage is acceptable).
3. Abstract (one page maximum)
  - a. Briefly describe the proposed change to include the intended implementation date.
  - b. Provide projected number of students, if applicable.
  - c. Indicate the projected life of the change, as applicable: one-time/limited duration or ongoing).
  - d. Describe the primary target audience or market.
  - e. Describe the strengths of the institution to undertake the change.
4. Describe how the need for the change was determined and how the change was approved by the institution.
5. Describe how the change is consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.
6. Provide documentation of faculty involvement in the planning and approval of the change.
7. Provide evidence of legal authority for the change if approval is required by the governing board or the state.
8. Provide the curriculum for the entire program.



9. Provide program-specific goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program.
10. Describe how the student learning outcomes for the program will be assessed.
11. Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program. Do not provide syllabi or catalogs (though course description *excerpts* from a catalog are acceptable).
12. Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program.
13. Provide the planned method(s) of delivery, as defined in policy, of the program.
14. Provide the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered, i.e., on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s). (Providing this information does not replace submitting a notification or prospectus for approval, if necessary, of an off-campus instructional site as required by policy.)
15. Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
16. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program.
17. For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in the traditional formats have been achieved.
18. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change (See Appendix A).
19. Provide [Common Content C](#) – Resources, relative to the proposed change (See Appendix A).
20. Provide [Common Content D](#) – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change (See Appendix A).

The prospectus is limited to 25 pages in length; appendices can be used if more space is needed. Changes requiring SACSCOC approval cannot be implemented until approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

### **Program Closures Requirements**

Any time a program is closed, it is a substantive change.

If an institution decides to close an educational program, THECB and 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. Programs 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.

SACSCOC indicates:

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 website for more information on closing a program, site, branch, or institution in the Procedures section of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy: <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

Off-campus program closures must also be addressed through the THECB and SACSCOC. 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.

When programs at TAMIU 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. The SACSCOC liaison reviews the program closure documentation in CIM, TAMIU management system. Once this has happened, the dean in consultation with the program chair and faculty, then prepares a "teach-out" plan. The plan must be reviewed by the SACSCOC liaison and approved by the Provost prior to submission to THECB and SACSCOC. The plan must follow SACSCOC guidelines found in the SACSCOC website for more information on closing a program, site, branch, or institution in the Procedures section of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy: <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

The next section outlines the substantive change process at TAMIU.

### **Substantive Change Process at TAMIU**

The process of substantive changes is guided if the change is an Institutional Substantive Change or a Curricular Substantive Change. This section will provide the process for determining substantive changes.

#### *Curricular Substantive Changes*

While the vast majority of program proposals will receive a full curricular review by the University Curriculum Committee, all new and proposed program changes that indicate a substantive change will get a full review. The workflow of curricular substantive changes is provided in Table 2 (See Appendix B for visual workflow).

**Table 2. Curricular Substantive Change Workflow**

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Reviewer</b>
1	Department Review and Vote
2	Department Chair
3	University Core Curriculum Committee (if necessary)
4	Registrar
5	College Curriculum Committee
6	College Dean
7	University Curriculum Committee
8	SACSCOC Liaison
9	Provost
10	President

Curriculum proposals of programs are initiated by faculty in departments/programs; these must be submitted through the originating department or program and require approval by the department head and/or program chair. The individual who submits the proposal will be guided through a series of prompts to assist in determining if the proposal is a substantive change. These prompts allow for determination of whether a change is substantive and provides the mechanism for ascertaining if cumulative changes across time trigger a substantive change. Following approval at the department level (department/unit and chair), the Office of the Registrar will evaluate the proposal for consistency and structural issues. After the Registrar's review, the curriculum proposal will be forwarded to the college's curriculum committee. Following review by the college curriculum committee, the proposal will be reviewed by the appropriate dean for review and approval. Curriculum proposals approved by the dean will be forwarded to the University Curriculum Committee (UCC) for review and consideration.

At the next level, the SACSCOC Liaison will review the proposal to determine if there is a significant departure that requires a substantive change prospectus to be sent to either the THECB or SACSCOC. If the proposal is found to be a substantive change, the SACSCOC Liaison and the Office of the Provost will coordinate to determine if a substantive change proposal or notification is required for the THECB, SACSCOC, or both.

Curriculum proposals approved by the UCC and reviewed by the SACSCOC Liaison are submitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost) for review and approval. The

Provost will review proposals for all the standards of quality and excellence prior to forwarding to the President for final institutional signature and submission.

### *Institutional Substantive Changes*

Institutional substantive changes are largely submitted by administrators at the level of Vice President or higher. These changes tend to be sweeping across the entire institution. As indicated above, these can include changes to the university mission, changes in governance, or university closures, as examples. Due to the larger impact of these types of change, the workflow is necessarily different. Table 3 provides the workflow for institutional substantive changes.

**Table 3. Institutional Substantive Change Workflow**

Steps	Reviewer
1	Administrative or Ad Hoc Committee Meetings
2	Executive Committee (Meeting minutes shared with faculty/staff)
3	University Curriculum Committee
4	SACSCOC Liaison
5	Provost
6	President

For institutional changes, there are fewer steps in the process due to the top-down approach of most institutional changes. The first step in the process is some combination of administrative meetings, mandates, and/or ad hoc committee reviewing an institutional change. For instance, if the mission statement is under review, any changes would be preceded by administrative discussions between the President and the Provost, the President and the Vice Presidents, the University Executive Committee, and, likely, an ad hoc committee. In such instances, there are presentations to faculty/staff/employees and solicitation of feedback. All of this goes into the final proposal.

Based on the feedback and consensus from all these, a final proposal would be put forth in either the University Executive Committee and/or the Vice President's Council. If it is decided the proposal should move forward, the individual who is advocating for the policy will submit the proposal through TAMIU's curricular process.

Since the President and Provost meet once a week, the SACSCOC Liaison will join one meeting each month. This will allow the Liaison to stay informed and discuss any institutional initiatives that may trigger a substantive change, ensuring that the Liaison is involved in the process. Unlike curricular substantive changes, the first official level of review is the University Curriculum Committee (UCC). Since there has been wide discussion about the proposal, this step is a combination of informational session and discussion of the proposal. A final vote from the UCC committee is symbolic. Once

approved, the SACSCOC Liaison and the Associate Provost will review to determine if any substantive changes are included in the proposal. Once the SACSCOC Liaison's review is completed, the proposal will be transmitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. After approval by the Provost, the President will have the final determination of the proposal's approval.

#### *Substantive Change Process after TAMIU Curricular Approval*

Once a substantive change has been identified, the SACSCOC Liaison and/or the Associate Provost is responsible for submitting paperwork (notification or proposal) to the appropriate regulating body. The Office of the Provost will coordinate submission of institutionally approved curriculum proposals to System, state, or regional entities, as required. Should SACSCOC, the THECB, or the Department of Education approvals be necessary, all will be pursued simultaneously upon final approval by the TAMIU curricular process. This ensures that all approvals are granted prior to the new or changed program initiation. The SACSCOC Liaison is responsible for submitting all changes via the website's Institutional Portal.

Notifications and approvals from external authorities, including the Texas A&M System Board of Regents TAMUS (BOR), THECB, and the U.S. Department of Education, will be the responsibility of the Provost. Notifications and approvals from SACSCOC will be the responsibility of the SACSCOC Liaison.

The Provost will be the primary record holder of all proposals, approvals, and rejections. Copies of requests and approvals to the TAMU BOR, the THECB, SACSCOC, and the Department of Education will be provided to appropriate administrative units for record-keeping.

#### **Responsible Parties for Submission of Substantive Changes**

All faculty have some degree of impact on ensuring that substantive changes are completed when they initiate new program proposals or change of program proposals to the TAMIU curriculum approval process. At this stage, faculty need to do an initial assessment to verify if the proposed changes will rise to the level of substantive changes. Questions included in the CIM system (where curricular proposal are submitted; see the TAMIU UCC Handbook for more information) assist faculty in this determination.

In addition to the TAMIU curricular process, there are three (3) external bodies that will evaluate substantive changes: the Texas A&M System Board of Regents (TAMU BOR), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). At TAMIU, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the SACSCOC liaison are responsible for determining if changes rise to the level of substantive changes. Specifically, The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for transmitting substantive changes to the TAMU BOR and the THECB; the SACSCOC liaison will submit substantive changes to SACSCOC.

### *SACSCOC 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 and Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee. The Accreditation Liaison is an ex-officio member of the University Curriculum Committee and must review all program change submissions prior to or during the curriculum/program approval process. As the liaison reviews the submissions, they will also submit via the CIM portal whether or not it prompts a substantive change, which will trigger engagement between the liaison and the initiator to discuss and address the change appropriately. All questions regarding possible substantive change actions should be directed to the institution's SACSCOC Liaison for guidance.

The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will:

1. Attend all meetings of the University Curriculum Committee and review all program changes in CIM to ensure the Liaison engages with the initiator so that the change requiring either notification to or approval of SACSCOC as a substantive change is effectively communicated.
2. Once a review of the program change has been conducted, the Liaison will communicate with an initiator to ensure that all proper paperwork has been shared and appropriately completed. The liaison will work with an initiator as needed to address any deficits. Upon completion of this review, the liaison forwards the substantive change documents 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 institutional Accreditation Liaison is responsible for timely reporting of a substantive change to the 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.

*Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*

The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) is responsible for transmitting all substantive changes to the Texas A&M System Board of Regents and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Additionally, the SACSCOC Liaison reports directly to the Provost and VPAA. As such, the Provost's Office works closely with the SACSCOC Liaison to ensure substantive changes are transmitted to all required external agencies.

The Provost or designee will:

1. Review and approve the substantive change in CIM. The Provost may request additional information from the initiating unit before approval.
2. With assistance of the Accreditation Liaison, the initiating unit will prepare the SACSCOC substantive documents (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 SACSCOC Liaison will notify all appropriate parties of any updates and the final decision.

#### *University Units/Departments*

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 submitted after any required approvals from the Texas A&M University System Office. Once the A&M University System submits the program change to the THECB, the SACSCOC Liaison will submit to SACSCOC.

Academic program changes must follow the university's curriculum approval process. Course and program additions, deletions, 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 and president. 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. Make contact with the Accreditation Liaison to determine if potential program changes could result in a substantive change report. The academic or administrative officer will submit the changes on CIM and will follow the workflow for approval.

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 to the Accreditation Liaison via the Substantive Change Request form for completeness. The documentation will be sent to the Provost for review and approval.
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") may require significant time, 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.

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.

### **Key Timelines for Substantive Change Submissions**

As noted above, discussion on substantive changes must occur prior to any proposal being developed or submitted in the TAMIU curricular process. Once the substantive change has been determined, this will trigger the need for external reviews. Reviews can range from full deliberation of a proposal by an external approval body to a simple memorandum.

Meeting timelines for external submission of substantive change proposals is crucial if a program wishes to implement changes in a timely fashion. The three timelines revolve around the TAMIU curricular calendar, the Texas A&M System Board of Regents (TAMU BOR), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

At TAMIU, curricular issues can be submitted through the CIM system any time throughout the year. However, curricular review at TAMIU only occurs during the fall semester. Unless approved by the President, required by the state, or for some other unforeseen emergency, all curricular proposals must be submitted by early November if the changes are to be initiated in the following academic year. External agency approvals can impact when substantive changes will actually take place. The UCC Handbook provides full details of the TAMIU curricular process and outlines important dates for curricular deadlines.

For the TAMU BOR, meetings occur quarterly ([Meeting Dates - Office of The Board of Regents \(tamus.edu\)](http://tamus.edu)):



- February
- May
- August
- November

Generally, proposals must be submitted at least a month in advance of meetings (often it can be more than a month in advance based on TAMU BOR scheduling). Approval at the institutional level is required before submitting to the TAMU BOR.

For the THECB, meetings also occur on a quarterly basis ([Quarterly Board Meetings - Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board](#)).

- January
- April
- July
- October

Depending on the type of proposal submitted, consultation by additional subcommittees may be necessary. Examples of these include programs that utilize over 50% distance education (e-Learning) or graduate programs. If proposals need to be reviewed by subcommittees of the THECB, this will be determined in the initial discussion phases of the proposal.

The majority of substantive program changes the UCC will be dealing with will also require SACSCOC Executive Council approval. For a substantive change requiring approval by the 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
- July 1 for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

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
- September 1 for review at the Board's biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year

**TAMIU substantive change documents must have gone through the curricular process and completed and sent to the SACSCOC Liaison 60 days prior to the SACSCOC deadlines above. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by the Provost.**

### **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 via a training/workshop. If more frequent updates are required, the liaison will inform each constituency group. Each unit head will be asked to verify receipt of the university’s substantive change information.

## **Appendix A**

### **Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications**

1. Provide a completed Faculty Roster Form to include faculty members scheduled to teach in the proposed substantive change (program, site, arrangement, etc.). Follow the Faculty Roster Form Instructions which require the institution to demonstrate the qualifications of each faculty member to teach the courses assigned (refer to Standard 6.2a (faculty qualifications) of the *Principles of Accreditation*). Use the standard Faculty Roster Form and instructions; do not create a new form or format:

a. Faculty Roster Form [DOCX] See Liaison for documentation.

b. Faculty Roster Form Instruction [PDF]

Link: <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/General-Instructions-for-Completing-the-Faculty-Roster-Form.pdf>

Include on the Faculty Roster Form all faculty members for the courses *to be taught*; do not include historical teaching assignments unless they are also to be taught in the proposed change.

a. For a program: list the faculty members for all courses in the curriculum; exclude general education courses, if applicable, unless the general education curriculum is the substantive change being submitted for review.

b. For an off-campus instructional site: list the faculty members for all courses to be taught at the site for the first 12 months of operation.

3. 4. Do not submit faculty curricula vitae or transcripts.

Referring to Standard 6.2a (faculty qualifications):

a. For a program: demonstrate the institution has at least one faculty member qualified in the discipline to develop the curriculum and/or teach in the program.

b. For a site: demonstrate the institution has at least one faculty member qualified in the discipline to teach at the site.

5. Provide narrative with supporting evidence to demonstrate the number of full-time faculty members will be adequate to support the proposed change. In addition to at least one faculty member qualified in the discipline, include any to-be-hired faculty members, if applicable, on the Faculty Roster Form (e.g., “To-be-hired #1,” “To-be-hired #2,” etc.) with the expected qualifications for teaching the courses assigned. Describe the impact on faculty workload of the proposed change.

6. For a graduate program,

a. demonstrates scholarship and research capability of faculty members teaching in the program and

b. if applicable, document faculty experience in directing student research or creative work (always applicable for doctoral programs).

### **Common Content C – Resources**

#### **Library and Learning/Information Resources**

1. List and describe discipline-specific learning resources to support a new program. Do not list all library resources; include only those related to the proposed change. If electronic databases are listed, describe the discipline-specific suites of resources rather than the name only of the database or the consortium through which it is accessed (Such as Galileo, Louis, TexShare, Viva, etc.).

2. Document discipline-specific refereed journals and primary source materials. This is particularly important for graduate programs and especially important for doctoral

programs.

3. Describe how students enrolled in a new program, at an off-campus instructional site, or in a distance education program can access discipline-specific library and learning/information resources.

4. Describe how students are made aware of library and learning/information resources available to them, how they can learn how to access the resources and are instructed in the use of online resources, as well as on-site library resources.

5. Describe resources to support students in access to and use of library and learning/information resources.

#### Student Support Services

1. Describe specific programs, services, and activities which will support students enrolled in the new program and / or enrolled at a new off-campus site /additional location and / or enrolled in distance education programs. Do not list student support services which are not relevant to the specific change.

#### Physical Resources

1. 2. Describe the adequacy of physical facilities which will support the change.

Describe equipment which will be available for a new program or available at a new site.

3. Describe the impact that the proposed change will have on physical facilities and equipment for existing programs and services.

#### Financial Resources

1. Describe in narrative the financial resources needed to initiate and provide on-going support of the proposed change.

2. Provide a budget for the first year of the proposed change. For a branch campus, provide a three-year budget. Do not provide an institutional budget.

3. Include in the budget resources to be directed to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services for the proposed change.

4. Include projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow for the proposed change.

5. Include a contingency plan should expected revenue does not materialize or should costs exceed estimates.

### **Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes**

1. Provide a brief description of institutional assessment processes.

2. Describe how the institution will incorporate the proposed change into the institution-wide assessment infrastructure and processes.

## Appendix B

# Curricular Substantive Change Workflow

**Step 1: Department Review and  
Vote**

**Step 2: Department Chair**

**Step 3: University Core Curriculum  
Committee (if necessary)**

**Step 4: Registrar**

**Step 5: College Curriculum  
Committee**

**Step 6: College Dean**

**Step 7: University Curriculum  
Committee**

**Step 8: SACSCOC Liaison (in CIM)**

**Step 9: Provost**

**Step 10: President**