



Title: Substantive Change Policy
Effective Date: May 13, 2024
Issuing Authority: Provost
Policy Contact: Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness
478-301-2070

Purpose

This policy sets forth the steps and requirements for faculty, administrators, and staff to monitor substantive changes occurring within academic programs at Mercer University and for the University to report such changes to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Scope

This policy applies to all employees at Mercer University.

Exclusions

None

Definitions

Substantive Change: “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services.”
(SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures, March 2023, p. 2)

The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures describes what is and is not consider a substantive change and what actions the institution should take. SACSCOC-defined substantive changes include, but are not limited to, adding a program that is a significant departure from existing programs; closing a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site; offering courses or programs at a site not previously approved as an off-campus instructional site; adding or relocating an off-campus instructional site; entering into a cooperative academic arrangement; and awarding dual or joint academic awards.

Policy Statement

Mercer University must comply with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy as a condition of its continued accreditation by SACSCOC. As a result, the university must notify, and in some

cases receive approval from, SACSCOC in advance and within specified timeframes prior to taking action that involves a SACSCOC-defined Substantive Change.

The institution's SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison (SACSCOC Liaison) is the university employee designated by the institution president to monitor compliance with SACSCOC requirements. The SACSCOC Liaison advises the president and provost which changes must be reported to SACSCOC and how those changes should be communicated, and, after being signed by the president, files appropriate documentation with SACSCOC. Responsibilities of an institution's SACSCOC Liaison are defined by SACSCOC guidelines.

Mercer University leaders have a responsibility to:

- Be generally aware of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures
- Inform the University's SACSCOC Liaison at the earliest point possible in the development of a proposal or plan that may constitute a Substantive Change for the University
- Provide the SACSCOC Liaison with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy when requested

Additional Resources

1. [SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation](#)
2. [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)
3. U.S. Department of Education, Substantive changes and other reporting requirements, 34 C.F.R § 602.22

History

Approved by President William Underwood April 9, 2013

Revised by Provost Scott Davis January 23, 2023

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