



## POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

NUMBER: 1.40134  
DIVISION: Academic Affairs  
TITLE: Substantive Change  
DATE: April 2, 2012  
REVISED: February 26, 2013, January 11, 2016, December 2, 2019, September XX, 2021  
Authorized by: Cheryl Stevens Robert Fischer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

### I. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets forth the steps and requirements for faculty, administrators, and staff to monitor substantive changes occurring within academic programs at Western Kentucky University, including changes to programs, certain types of changes to courses, where and how programs are offered, and institution-level changes.

#### A. Definition of Substantive Change

1. WKU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), which defines a substantive changes as “a significant modifications or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” Per SASCOC Policy, “(s)ubstantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services.” A more detailed explanation of SACSCOC requirements and a list of specific types of changes that constitute a substantive change can be found at <https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>.<http://www.sacscoc.org/>.

#### B. Types of Change that may Constitute Substantive Change

1. Program changes that could result in substantive change include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated.

- b. Addition of ~~courses or~~ programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation.
  - c. Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
  - d. Adding an additional method of delivery, changing a delivery method, or closing a delivery method to a currently offered program.
  - e. Substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program.
  - f. Establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50~~25~~% of an educational program.
  - g. Closing a program leading to a credential (any program leading to a degree or certificate), closing a delivery mode for a program, or closing the delivery of a program at an off-site location.
  - h. Reopening a program or off-campus instructional site.
  - i. Adding competency-based education programs and/or competency-based education programs using prior learning credit or direct assessment.
  - j. Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior knowledge or competency.
  - k. Entering a cooperative academic arrangement.
  - l. Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes ~~only~~ the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution.
  - m. Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs.
2. Institution-wide changes that could result in substantive change include, but are not limited to, the following:
- a. Change in the established mission or objectives of the institution or its programs.
  - b. Change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of WKU.
  - c. Changing the governance of an institution.
  - d. Merging/Consolidating with another institution or entity.
  - e. Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
  - f. Change from clock credit hours to credit clock hours or change from semesters to quarters or trimesters, or non-time-based methods or measures.
  - g. Establishment of a branch campus or merger/consolidation with another institution
  - g. Closing an off-campus instructional site, branch campus or institution.
  - h. Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution.
  - i. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution.

## II. Policy

1. Any unit within WKU that intends to make a change to its curricular offerings that may be

substantive, as noted in Section I.B.1.a-g., including collaborative academic arrangements, must take due steps to verify whether such a change constitutes a substantive change notify the WKU SACSCOC Liaison prior to implementation of the change.

2. If the change does constitute a substantive change, Academic Affairs the WKU SACSCOC Liaison will ensure that appropriate notification to SACSCOC occurs.

### III. Procedure

#### A. Responsibilities

To ensure compliance with this policy,

1. The SACSCOC Liaison will:
  - a. Develop and maintain a website with examples of substantive changes at: [http://www.wku.edu/academicaffairs/pd/sacs\\_substantive\\_changes.php](http://www.wku.edu/academicaffairs/pd/sacs_substantive_changes.php)
  - b. Provide the deans, department heads/chairs/directors, and faculty, and staff information about the substantive change policy;
  - c. Monitor programmatic additions and changes that proceed through the curriculum change process;
  - d. Identify those proposed changes that require notification to the SACS Commission on Colleges; and
  - e. Work with WKU department heads/chairs/directors and deans to determine if proposed changes constitute a substantive change.
2. Department heads/chairs/directors and deans are responsible for:
  - a. Completing, in a timely manner, the form for changes in programs under their charge, including joint and dual award programs; and
  - b. Working with the SACSCOC Liaison to gather relevant information to complete the notification/approval process of a substantive change to SACSCOC.
3. The Division of Extended Learning and Outreach (DELO) and the SACSCOC Liaison will monitor changes to programs as they add or remove instruction at off-campus sites where programs or dual credit courses are offered and add or remove program delivery modes, and dual credit courses and liaise with pertinent departments about programs to determine whether substantive changes have occurred.
  - a. If substantive changes have not occurred, DELO will continue monitoring
  - b. If substantive changes have occurred, DELO will inform the SACSCOC Liaison accordingly

4. ~~The Vice President for Enrollment & Student Experience (or designee) will monitor those programs involving joint admissions and~~ **The Associate Provost for Global Learning and International Affairs will monitor** international academic arrangements **and will liaise work** with the SACSCOC Liaison to determine whether revisions to programs constitute substantive changes ~~and will report any substantive changes as necessary to the SACSCOC Liaison.~~
  5. **For substantive changes that are institution wide changes (i.e. I. B. 2.), the Provost will work in conjunction with the President to inform SACSCOC in a timely manner of those changes, following the procedure and guidelines as posted on the SACSCOC website.**
  6. In the event that the Office of Academic Affairs becomes aware that a substantive change has been made prior to notifying SACSCOC, the WKU SACSCOC liaison will work with SACSCOC to notify them of the unreported change, following pertinent SACSCOC policies. **The SACSCOC liaison will work with the department/school and college to develop a preventative plan for future unreported changes.**
- B. Processes
1. Those unsure if an action or actions require WKU to notify SACSCOC of a substantive change should contact the SACSCOC Liaison for clarification and consultation. **A summary table of substantive changes is listed in Appendix A.**
  2. When a unit within WKU intends to make a change to its curricular offerings, the appropriate coordinator should work with the SACSCOC Liaison to make sure that the appropriate parties are notified in a timely manner **and adjust implementation dates as recommended by the SACSCOC Liaison.**
  3. As soon as the decision is made that an action may constitute a substantive change, department chairs/heads/**directors** or deans should contact the SACSCOC Liaison to begin the substantive change process, **if necessary, determine the implementation timeline, and adhere to the SACSCOC Liaison's deadlines for timely submission to SACSCOC.**
  4. The WKU SACSCOC Liaison, in consultation with the Provost, will
    - a. Liaise with SACSCOC to determine which SACSCOC procedures should be followed;
    - b. File the appropriate notification and/or prospectus as deemed necessary;
    - c. Coordinate any follow-up actions required of Western Kentucky University by SACSCOC.
  5. ~~For substantive changes that are institution wide changes (i.e. I. B. 2.), the Provost will work in conjunction with the President to inform SACSCOC in a timely manner of those changes, following the procedure and guidelines as posted on the SACSCOC website.~~

#### **IV. Related Policies**

1.4132 Course Section Delivery Mode Definitions and Relationship to Distance Education  
<https://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/index.php?policy=284>

#### **V. Reason for Revision:**

February 2013

Changes to I.B.1., I.B.2., and III.A.3 due to SACSCOC requirement changes effective January 1, 2013.

January, 2016

Changes to II.1, III.A, II.B.1, II.B.3 and non-substantive changes as part of the five-year policy review per Policy 0.000V Policy on Policies.

December, 2019

Revisions reflect personnel changes within the Office of the Provost.

June 2021

Revisions to SACSCOC Substantive Change policy

Appendix A Attached

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	<b>Substantive Change Reference Table By Type</b>						
2	Refer to the Substantive Change Policy for fee and visit information (if required). A prospectus or teach-out plan must be submitted to the Office of the Provost four weeks prior to the SACSCOC deadline.						
3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
4	<b>Institutional Changes</b>						
5		<b>Change in measure to student progress to completion</b>	Changes to/from at the <i>institutional level</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• semester, trimester, or quarter academic calendar.</li> <li>• time-based or non-time based (i.e., competency based measures.</li> <li>• close hour-based or credit hour-based measures.</li> </ul>		X SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
6		<b>Competency- based Education by Course/Credit- based Approach</b>	Required if an institution offers its first program in which 50% or more of the credits are earned through competency based-education		X SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
7		<b>Distance Education - Institutional Level Approval</b>	Required if an institution offers its first program in which 50% or more of the credits are earned through distance education  <a href="#">WKU has been approved for distance education. Refer to new program or method of delivery substantive changes.</a>		X SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
8		<b>Governance Change</b>	Significantly altering governing board bylaws, the board's scope of authority or responsibility, the number of board members, or changing the selection process for board members.	X  Requires notification to SACSCOC at least 6 months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting	X SACSCOC Full Board	1. Description of change 2. Intended Implementation date 3. Date of SACSCOC Board of Trustee Meeting and year for which the institution will submit the change. 4. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet 5. Prospectus (use outline in specific policy guidelines)	<b>March 15 September 1</b>

9		<b>Institution Closure</b>	Imminent closure of institution or closure in very near future.		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Teach-Out Plan  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
10		<b>Institution Relocation</b>	Institution is moving physical location to another site.		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
11		<b>Institution, Program, or Location Acquisition</b>	Acquiring an institution, program, or instructional location from another institution or entity.	X  Requires notification to SACSCOC at least 6 months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting	X  SACSCOC Full Board	1. Description of change 2. Intended Implementation date 3. Date of SACSCOC Board of Trustee Meeting and year for which the institution will submit the change. 4. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet 5. Prospectus (use outline in specific policy guidelines)	<b>March 15 September 1</b>
12		<b>Institutional Contingency Teach- Out Plan</b>	Only required if institution is placed on probation by SACSCOC, SACSCOC accreditation is ending, state authorization is revoked, provisional certification for federal financial aid by US Department of Education, or emergency action by US Department of Education.		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Teach-Out Plan  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
13		<b>Level Change</b>	Initiating coursework or a program (certificate, diploma, degree, or other credit-bearing program) at a different level than previously approved or authorized by SACSCOC.  Exceptions may apply. Refer to the policy.		X  SACSCOC Full Board	1. Level change application	<b>March 15 September 1</b>



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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
14		<b>Merger / Consolidation</b>	Merger or consolidation of a SACSCOC accredited institution with one or more institutions or entities.	X  Requires notification to SACSCOC at least 6 months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting	X  SACSCOC Full Board	1. Description of change 2. Intended Implementation date 3. Date of SACSCOC Board of Trustee Meeting and year for which the institution will submit the change. 4. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet 5. Prospectus (use outline in specific policy guidelines)	<b>March 15 September 1</b>
15		<b>Mission Change</b>	Fundamental alteration of the University mission		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
16		<b>Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change</b>	University comes under new ownership or control changes.	X  Requires notification to SACSCOC at least 6 months prior to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting	X  SACSCOC Full Board	1. Description of change 2. Intended Implementation date 3. Date of SACSCOC Board of Trustee Meeting and year for which the institution will submit the change. 4. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet 5. Prospectus (use outline in specific policy guidelines)	<b>March 15 September 1</b>
17	<b>Program Changes</b>						
18		<b>Clock- Credit Hour Conversion</b>	Changing a program's progress to completion from credit hours to clock hours		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>

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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
19		<b>Competency- based Education by Direct Assessment (Approval)</b>	Offering a program in which 50% or more of the program can be earned through direct assessment to competency based assessment.		X  SACSCOC Full Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see outline provided in related policy)</i>	<b>March 15 September 1</b>
20		<b>Competency- based Education by Direct Assessment (Notification)</b>	Offering a program in which 25-49% or more of the program can be earned through direct assessment to competency based assessment.	X		1. Substantive Change Coversheet 2. Name of Program 3. Credential of program 4. Institutional Level 5. Affirmative Statement 6. Implementation date	
21		<b>Cooperative Academic Arrangement</b>	An agreement with an entity to deliver program content recorded on WKU transcript as it own IF: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% or more of the program is offered through the agreement</li> <li>• WKU could not deliver the program without the agreement.</li> </ul>	X		1. Substantive Change Coversheet 2. Affirmative statement on the recording of credit on WKU transcript 3. Explanation on why notification is needed 4. Program for which credits will be earned. 5. Signed copy of the MOA 6. Implementation date	
22		<b>Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non- Title IV Entities (Approval)</b>	An agreement with an entity not certified to participate in US Department of Education title IV programs to deliver 25-50% of a program's content and the content is recorded on the WKU transcript.		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  <i>(see outline provided in related policy)</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>

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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
23		<b>Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non- Title IV Entities (Notification)</b>	An agreement with an entity not certified to participate in US Department of Education title IV programs to deliver less than 25% of a program's content and the content is recorded on the WKU transcript.	X		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Substantive Change Coversheet</li> <li>2. Affirmative statement on the recording of credit on WKU transcript</li> <li>3. Name or program and the credential</li> <li>4. Identify the percentage of credit to be earned through the entity</li> <li>5. Signed copy of the MOA</li> <li>6. Institutional contacts for both parties</li> <li>7. Implementation date</li> </ol>	
24		<b>Correspondence Education</b>	Offering a program through correspondence education		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	<i>See distance education requirements.</i>	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
25		<b>Dual Academic Award</b>	Student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions leading to each institution granting an academic award at the same credential level. (excludes JUMP programs)	X		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Substantive Change Coversheet</li> <li>2. Name of each institution</li> <li>3. Program name and credential to be awarded at each institution</li> <li>4. Instructional Level</li> <li>5. Signed copy of MOA</li> <li>6. Contact information for both institutions</li> <li>7. Statement assuring compliance with standard 9.4</li> </ol>	

26		<b>Joint Academic Award with non- SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)</b>	Partnership with a non-SACSCOC institution to offer one degree with both institution names, seals, and leadership signature on a diploma		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  (see outline provided in related policy)	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
27		<b>Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution(s)</b>	Partnership with a SACSCOC institution to offer one degree with both institution names, seals, and leadership signature on a diploma	X		1. Substantive Change Coversheet 2. Signed copy of the MOA 3. Name of program 4. Credential to be awarded 5. Instructional level of the program 6. Contact information at each institution 7. Implementation Date	
28		<b>Method of Delivery (Approval)</b>		Approval is not required, since WKU is not on restriction.			
29		<b>Method of Delivery (Notification)</b>	Changing the delivery method for a program. This applies to programs that are taught face-to-face and the department wishes to offer the program completely online, or programs are taught completely online and the department wishes to offer the program face-to-face.	X		1. Substantive Change Coversheet 2. Name of program 3. Credential to be awarded 4. Instructional level 5. Method of delivery to be added 6. Implementation Date	
30		<b>New Program (Approval)</b>	A new program with 50-100% new content (not previously offered at WKU) or if a program is revised and includes 50-100% new content (not previously offered at WKU). Applies to any program leading to an awarded credential.		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  (see outline provided in related policy)	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
31		<b>New Program (Notification)</b>	A new program with 25-49% new content (not previously offered at WKU) or if a program is revised and includes 25-49% new content (not previously offered at WKU). Applies to any program leading to an awarded credential.	X		1. Substantive Change cover sheet 2. Name of the program 3. Credential to be awarded 4. Instructional level 5. Method of delivery 6. Implementation Date	

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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
32		<b>Program Closure</b>	Program closure includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceasing admission in to a program with the intent to end the program.</li> <li>• Removing a program option from a specific location (main campus or off-campus instructional site).</li> <li>• Ending a method of delivery for the program (i.e., ending a web option but continuing face-to-face option, etc.).</li> </ul>		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Teach-Out Plan	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
33		<b>Program Designed for Prior Learning (Approval)</b>	Requiring prior learning as a condition of admission to a program	Approval is not required, since WKU is not on restriction.			
34		<b>Program Designed for Prior Learning (Notification)</b>	Requiring prior learning as a condition of admission to a program	X		1. Substantive Change cover sheet 2. Name of the program 3. Credential to be awarded 4. Instructional level 5. Description of prior learning required. 6. Detailed description (see policy for requirements) 7. Implementation date	
35		<b>Program Length Change</b>	25% increase or decrease in a program AND the student's time to completion extends more than one term or decreases by more than one term. Applies to all awarded credentials.		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  (see outline provided in related policy)	<b>January 1 July 1</b>

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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
36		<b>Program Re- open</b>	Re-opening a closed program within 5 years of closure only. Programs closed over 5 years are considered new programs.	X		1. Name of program 2. Credential to be awarded 3. Instructional Level 4. Closure date 5. Date of SACSCOC approval of closure 6. Case ID or copy of the approval letter 7. Statement of institutional support and resources	
37	<b>Off- Campus Instructional Site</b>						
38		<b>Off- Campus Instructional Site (Notification)</b>	Site where 25-49% of a program's instruction is offered.	X		1. Substantive Change cover sheet 2. Site name 3. Physical address of new location 4. Implementation Date.	
39		<b>Off- Campus Instructional Site (Approval)</b>	Site where 50% of a program's instruction is offered.		X	1. Prospectus (see outline provided in related policy)	Deadlines are contingent on approval type.
40	<u>Off-Campus Instructional Site</u> : a location geographically apart from WKU's main campus where instruction is delivered.	<b>Site Relocation (Non- Branch Campus)</b>	Moving a site to another location serving the same geographic area	X		1. Substantive Change Cover Sheet 2. Name/Address of current location 3. Name/Address of new location 4. Implementation Date 5. Statement stipulating there	

					is no overlap	
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3		<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Notification</b>	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documents Required</b>	<b>SACSCOC Deadline</b>
41	<p><u>Branch Campus</u>: a site geographically apart from WKU where instruction is delivered. However, it operates independently from WKU, is permanent, has its own faculty and administrators and has its own budget and hiring authority.</p> <p><i>Refer to definitions for off-campus instructional sites, branch campuses, programs, and percentage definitions in the SACSCOC Substantive Change policy. Includes Dual Credit.</i></p>	<b>Site Relocation (Branch Campus)</b>	Moving a site to another location serving the same geographic area		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Prospectus  (see outline provided in related policy)	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
42		<b>Name or Address Change</b>	Changing the name of an existing site or if the physical address is changing but the site is not being relocated.	X		1. Substantive Change Cover Sheet 2. Name/Address of current location 3. Name/Address of new location 4. Implementation Date 5. Statement stipulating the location did not physically change.	
43		<b>Closing a Site</b>	A site where instruction is offered stops admitting students.		X  SACSCOC Executive Council of Board	1. Teach-Out Plan  (see Appendix A of Substantive Change Policy and Procedures)	<b>January 1 July 1</b>
44		<b>Re- Opening a Site</b>	Re-opening a previously closed off-campus instructional site within 5 years of the closure date. If the site has been closed for more than 5 years, the site is subject to new site approval.	X		1. Substantive Change cover sheet 2. Name/Address of the site as it appeared on the SACSCOC letter approving closure. 3. The date SACSCOC approved the closure. 4. Name of the site upon re-opening 5. Implementation date 6. Affirmative statement	