

Substantive Change Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish institutional procedures for recognizing and approving substantive changes in order to ensure compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) [Substantive Change Policy](#).

UTRGV Persons Affected

This policy applies to all programs, departments, colleges, and schools at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV).

SACSCOC Definitions

Substantive Change: Substantive change is defined by SACSCOC as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.

The following changes are considered substantive under federal regulations and must be approved by SACSCOC prior to implementation:

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution.
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution.
- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- The 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.
- A change from clock hours to credit hours.
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program.
- The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.
- The establishment of a branch campus.
- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution.
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution.
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution.
- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution.

- 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.

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation.

There are three SACSCOC procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes:

Procedure One: Review of Substantive Changes requiring approval prior to implementation. Procedure one may also require notification.

Procedure Two: Review of Substantive Changes requiring **only** notification prior to implementation. Procedure two may also require submission of additional documents.

Procedure Three: Requires review and approval for closing a program, site, branch campus or institution. Procedure three requires notification **and** approval.

Additional procedures for the following types of changes are outlined in separate SACSCOC Policy Statements and are referenced in the SACSCOC [Substantive Change Policy](#).

[“Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status”](#)

- Initiating mergers or consolidations
- Acquiring any program or site from another institution
- Adding as a permanent location any site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that is closing
- Changes in governance, ownership, means of control or legal status

[“Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs”](#)

Complete information on the types of changes considered substantive, including due dates and special instructions, may be found in the SACSCOC [Substantive Change Policy](#).

UTRGV Policy

Before the implementation of any potential substantive change, programs, departments, colleges, and schools will follow the approval process set forth below. This includes timely notification of substantive changes to the University's employee designated as its SACSCOC Liaison.

The University's SACSCOC Liaison/Associate Vice President (AVP) for Institutional Accreditation is responsible for documenting substantive changes and submitting notifications

and prospectuses to SACSCOC. Please contact the University's SACSCOC Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation upon becoming aware of any potential substantive change.

Responsibilities

UTRGV SACSCOC Liaison/Associate Vice President for Institutional Accreditation:

1. Throughout the academic year, the UTRGV SACSCOC Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation will accept information on any anticipated significant changes.
2. The SACSCOC Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation will review and determine whether a proposed change is substantive;
3. The SACSCOC Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation will determine what action with respect to SACSCOC is needed when a change is substantive;
4. The SACSCOC Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation will file the appropriate notice or prospectus with SACSCOC and coordinate with SACSCOC any required follow-up action.

Vice presidents, associate/assistant vice presidents, deans, associate/assistant deans, directors and department chairs:

It is the responsibility of all VPs, all deans, all directors, and all department chairs to:

1. Be aware of the substantive change policy and, upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may be substantive, notifying the SACSCOC Liaison at the earliest point possible.
2. Provide any data or information required to prepare documentation and reports needed to comply with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.
3. Ensure that no substantive change is implemented prior to completion of the SACSCOC notification and approval process.

Procedures

Substantive changes cannot be implemented by UTRGV until SACSCOC has been notified and, if applicable, approval is obtained. To ensure compliance with the SACSCOC substantive change timeline, those proposing any change must notify the UTRGV SACSCOC Liaison/Associate Vice President for Institutional Accreditation well in advance of the implementation.

Substantive Changes Requiring Notification:

For substantive changes requiring only notification, UTRGV must submit a letter of notification to SACSCOC prior to implementation. Letters of notification are accepted by SACSCOC throughout the academic year, but must be received prior to implementation of the change.

Substantive Changes Requiring Approval:

For substantive changes requiring approval, UTRGV must submit a prospectus and other documentation to SACSCOC prior to implementation. Certain types of changes requiring

approval must be submitted to SACSCOC as much as one year in advance of implementation. Changes requiring approval will not be implemented by UTRGV until approved by SACSCOC.

Notifying the UTRGV SACSCOC Liaison/Associate Vice President for Institutional Accreditation:

Notifications regarding anticipated substantive changes must be submitted to the UTRGV SACSCOC Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation in writing using the [Substantive Change Action Plan form](#).

Other Approvals:

Depending on the nature of the change, substantive changes in an academic program must be submitted to the University of Texas System Board of Regents, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and/or the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

If a unit has implemented any program that may be considered a substantive change without notification of the SACSCOC Liaison, it is their responsibility to do so immediately.

Relevant Federal and/or State Statute(s), Board of Regents' Rule(s), UTS Policy (ies), and/or Coordinating Board Rule(s)

[Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Rule 5.45](#) – Criteria for New Baccalaureate and Master's Degree Programs

[Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Rule 5.46](#) – Criteria for New Doctoral Programs

[Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter P, Rules 4.255 through 4.264](#)- Approval of Distance Education Courses and Programs for Public Institutions

[Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter D, Rule 5.76](#)- General Principles for Off-Campus Educational Units

[The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley HOP ADM 06-202](#) - Curriculum Changes

[The University of Texas System Regents' Rules and Regulations, Rule 40307](#), Academic Program Approval Standards