

## Substantive Change Policy

### **Purpose:**

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

### **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 before implementation:**

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credential).
- 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.
- 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.
- Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the Title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.

- Substantially increase or decrease in 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.
- Adding competency-based education programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.

Other Substantive change requirements, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval before implementing a substantive change.
- An institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2 (Substantive change) of the Principles of Accreditation and with the Substantive Change Policy and Procedures and related policies.
- An institution is required to have a written substantive change policy and procedure. It must be approved through institutional processes and published in institutional documents accessible to those affected. The purpose of the institution's substantive change policy and procedure is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion as required by Substantive Change Policy and Procedures. Institutions are responsible for implementing and enforcing their substantive change policy and procedure.
- An institution's fiscal and administrative capability to operate off-campus instructional sites is assessed when a new site is reviewed for approval and as part of decennial and fifth-year interim reviews.
- A new off-campus instructional site is subject to a substantive change committee visit. A committee visit, when necessary, is authorized when a site is approved. The committee visit ensures the site has the personnel, facilities, and resources identified by an institution in its application or prospectus and ensures the quality of instructional and support services offered at the site.
- Different or additional requirements apply to an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION. Restriction applies if an institution has been placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause over the prior three academic years, or if an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs.

An institution is required to submit an institutional contingency teach-out plan to SACSCOC within 30 days of notification if the institution is placed or continued on Probation or Probation for Good Cause, or

if the institution meets conditions enumerated in the procedures section of this policy originating from the U.S. Department of Education or state authority.

**SACSCOC has organized substantive changes into three general categories:**

Institutional changes, program changes, and off-campus instructional site/additional location changes. Complete information on the types of changes considered substantive, including reporting requirements, due dates, and special instructions, may be found in the [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#). The SACSCOC Board of Trustees may approve additional types of substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval before implementation.

**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, Program Development, and Analysis is responsible for documenting substantive changes and submitting notifications and prospectuses to SACSCOC. Please contact the University's SACSCOC Liaison upon becoming aware of any potential substantive change.

**Responsibilities:**

***UTRGV SACSCOC Liaison/Associate Vice President for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis***

1. Throughout the academic year, the AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will provide regular updates regarding the substantive change.
2. Throughout the academic year, the AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will accept information on anticipated significant changes.
3. The AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will review submitted information and documentation to determine whether a proposed change is substantive.
4. The AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will determine what action concerning SACSCOC is needed for the proposed change.
5. The AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will work with individuals involved in the change to develop required submission documents.
6. The AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will file the appropriate notice or prospectus with SACSCOC and coordinate with SACSCOC any required follow-up action.
7. The AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will notify all affected institutional representatives once the change approval process is complete.

***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, notify the AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison immediately.
2. Complete the proposed change form provided by the AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison.
3. Provide any data or information required to prepare documentation and reports for submission to SACSCOC as required by the [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#).
4. Ensure that no substantive change is implemented before 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, Program Development, and Analysis well in advance of the implementation.

The Accreditation Liaison/Associate Vice President for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis will work with those proposing the change to document the change type, determine reporting requirements, and develop the timeline for approval and implementation.

***Notifying the Associate Vice President for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis/SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison***

Notifications regarding anticipated substantive changes must be submitted to the UTRGV Accreditation Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation in writing using the appropriate Substantive Change form. The form submitted will depend on the type of change being proposed and the Accreditation Liaison/AVP for Institutional Accreditation, Program Development, and Analysis will provide the proposer with the appropriate form based on initial discussions regarding the type of change.

***Other Required Approvals***

Depending on the nature of the change, substantive changes in an academic program may require submission 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) and the United States Department of Education (USDE).

If a unit has implemented any program, agreement, or teaching site that may be considered a substantive change without notification of the Accreditation 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