

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION: Academic Affairs
AREA: Academic Programs

Number: 12.03.02

SUBJECT: Substantive Change in Academic Programs

I. PURPOSE

In order to ensure that all Academic Programs offered through the University of Houston are in compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation requirements, the University of Houston and its respective colleges are required to adhere to the policies and procedures as set forth in this document.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

Member institutions are required to notify SACSCOC of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes. Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution as described in Sections III A-D. The types of substantive change and the procedures for addressing them appropriately may be found in the Commission's [policy on substantive change](#) and related materials on the [SACSCOC website](#).

III. PROCEDURES

The University is required to notify and/or obtain approval from SACSCOC before certain changes in academic programs can be implemented. In order to ensure compliance, any department, school, or college must contact the University of Houston's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison and notify the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid (Executive Director and Compliance Officer) as soon as planning is initiated for any of the changes in paragraphs A - D below:

A. Changes at the **Program/Course Level** that would:

1. Create/close a program of study.
2. Initiate coursework or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently approved.
3. Initiate programs or courses offered through a contractual agreement or consortium.
4. Alter significantly the length of a program.
5. Initiate degree completion programs.
6. Initiate a certificate program at a new off-campus site at employer's request and on short notice (previously approved program).
7. Changing, adding, or discontinuing a method of delivery (face-to-face, distance education, competency-based) for existing programs.

8. Adding program pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
 9. Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs.
- B. Changes at the **School/College/Department Level** that would result in:
1. Initiating off-campus instructional sites where students can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program.
 2. Initiating off-campus sites where students can obtain 25-49% or more credits toward a program.
 3. Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area).
- C. Changes by the University at the **Institutional Level** for:
1. Initiating a branch campus.
 2. Initiating a merger/consolidation.
 3. Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution.
 4. Relocating a main or branch campus.
 5. Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution.
 6. Closing an institution/program and initiating a teach-out agreement.
 7. Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether clock hours or credit hours.
 8. Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
 9. Reopening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- D. Other less frequent substantive changes may require SACSCOC notification or approval, such as initiating dual or joint degree programs, or initiating different types of programs. A complete list of substantive changes requiring SACSCOC notification or approval can be found on the SACSCOC website under [Substantive Changes](#). More information can also be found on the Provost's website under <https://uh.edu/provost/university/academic-program-planning/sacscoc/>. If there is a question as to whether a program change triggers SACSCOC procedures, the University of Houston SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison should be consulted at the early stages of planning.
- E. Reporting of substantive changes to SACSCOC must be completed in accordance with established timelines based upon the nature of the proposed change. Timelines for reporting may be found in the SACSCOC [policy on substantive change](#). Furthermore, any SACSCOC required documents (cover sheet, prospectus, etc.) for the contemplated changes must be completed for review by the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison and the Office of Academic Affairs at least two months prior to the deadlines established by SACSCOC for notification and approval.

- F. The University of Houston, SACSCOC Liaison will notify the SACSCOC Director of Substantive Change at least 6 months prior to implementation (12 months for changes in degree level) of the substantive change. The notification will include all required documentation and relevant details.
- G. The SACSCOC may authorize an on-site committee visit within six months from the start date for any substantive change for the following:
 - 1. The initiation of an off-campus instructional site at which a student can obtain 50% or more of the credits toward a program.
 - 2. The initiation of a branch campus.
 - 3. The initiation of a change in governance, ownership, control, or legal status.
 - 4. The initiation of a merger or consolidation.
 - 5. The initiation of courses or programs at a higher or lower level than currently approved.
 - 6. Instances where an on-site visit is needed for in-depth evaluation beyond what is covered in the prospectus.

IV. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible Party: Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Review: Every five years or when SACSCOC initiates changes to the substantive change policy.

V. APPROVAL

/Paula Myrick Short/

Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

/Renu Khator/

President

Date of President's Approval: March 11, 2022

VI. REFERENCES

[Southern Association of Colleges and Schools \(SACS\) Commission on Colleges \(COC\)](#)