

11.99.99.K0.02 Substantive Change

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Procedure Summary

This procedure explains how Texas A&M University-Kingsville (Texas A&M-Kingsville) will ensure compliance with substantive change policies of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Colleges (SACSCOC).

Definitions

SACSCOC – Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, the regional accrediting association for the southeastern U.S., including colleges and universities in Texas.

Accreditation Liaison – Administrator or senior faculty member designated by the university president having responsibilities to ensure that compliance with SACSCOC policies is incorporated into institutional planning, to notify SACSCOC of substantive changes within the university, to familiarize the university community with SACSCOC policies, and to serve as the contact person for SACSCOC staff.

Substantive Change – 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. Substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- (a) Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- (b) Changing the legal status, form of control or ownership of the institution
- (c) Changing the governance of the institution.
- (d) Merging/consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- (e) Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
- (f) Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- (g) Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- (h) Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials).
- (i) 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.
- (j) 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.
- (k) Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.

- (l) Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- (m) Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- (n) 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.
- (o) Substantially increase or decreasing 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.
- (p) Adding competency-based education programs.
- (q) Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.
- (r) Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- (s) Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- (t) Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- (u) Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- (v) 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.
- (w) Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.
- (x) Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

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

- (a) An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change.
- (b) 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.

Implementing substantive changes without prior approval is a serious infraction that can jeopardize the University's standing with SACSCOC and the U.S. Department of Education resulting in sanction, loss of accreditation, and a loss of federal funds.

Procedure

1. GENERAL

- 1.1. The purpose of this procedure is to specify the responsibilities associated with changes in practices at Texas A&M-Kingsville that may affect the university's SACSCOC accreditation and to specify the process by which such changes would be addressed and communicated to the university's accrediting organization.

- 1.2. The university president, vice presidents, and the accreditation liaison assume primary responsibility for implementing this procedure.
- 1.3. No unit of Texas A&M-Kingsville, including units located on any of its off-campus sites, may enact practices or changes that would be considered unauthorized substantive changes according to SACSCOC standards.
- 1.4. Compliance with this procedure is mandatory for all units of Texas A&M-Kingsville.
- 1.5. This procedure will be posted online and distributed to all units of the university.

2. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

- 2.1. Substantive changes that require only internal authorization and notification to SACSCOC are detailed in “Substantive Change Policies and Procedures.”
- 2.2. For substantive changes that require that SACSCOC be notified, but that do not require SACSCOC approval, an approving authority at the university may authorize the change. The university approving authority may be the university president, or the vice president with responsibility for the practice undergoing change, in collaboration with the accreditation liaison.
- 2.3. Once any substantive change described in this section is approved internally, the university president or the accreditation liaison will promptly notify SACSCOC.
- 2.4. For a substantive change requiring notification only, it can be submitted any time before implementation.

3. APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

- 3.1. Substantive changes that require SACSCOC approval are detailed in “Substantive Change Policies and Procedures”.
- 3.2. For substantive changes that require SACSCOC approval, an approving authority at the university may authorize the initiation of the application process. The university approving authority may be the university president or the vice president with responsibility for the proposed change in collaboration with the accreditation liaison.
- 3.3. The accreditation liaison will coordinate the application efforts between the unit proposing the substantive change, central administration of the university, and the SACSCOC staff. The accreditation liaison will assist the unit in composing the substantive change prospectus, ensuring that it conforms to the requirements stated in “Substantive Change Policies and Procedures”.
- 3.4. The university president, or designee, is the approving authority for the application of substantive change. If the president approves the application and its accompanying prospectus, it is submitted for approval of substantive change to SACSCOC.

- 3.5. Substantive change prospectuses require six months from submission to approval, so SACSCOC recommends receipt by January 1st for fall implementation and by July 1st for spring implementation.
- 3.6. Only after SACSCOC has approved the application for substantive change can the change be implemented.

4. MONITORING COMPLIANCE

- 4.1. The accreditation liaison will submit an annual written report to the university president and a verbal report to the president's council on the status of university compliance with this procedure and on practices that could result in substantive changes. Additional reports will be submitted as deemed appropriate.
- 4.2. The university president and accreditation liaison will continually monitor compliance with SACSCOC policies and standards.
- 4.3. Practices suspected to be out of compliance with this procedure or with policies or standards set by SACSCOC will be referred to the appropriate vice president for timely investigation and resolution. In the event that the suspected practice is found to constitute an unreported substantive change, the university will immediately notify SACSCOC.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

[19 Tex. Admin. Code § 4.274, Standards and Criteria for Institutions](#)

[Substantive Change Policies and Procedures](#)

[SACSCOC, Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)

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