

Sam Houston State University

Substantive Change

Updated March 12, 2015

What is a Substantive Change?

A substantive change is defined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.

Institutions are required to notify the SACSCOC, and in some cases seek approval, for substantive changes prior to their implementation.

What does this mean for me?

University personnel should be familiar with what constitutes a substantive change and report any changes, in advance, that might be considered a substantive change to the SACSCOC liaison so that timely SACSCOC reporting can occur.

Why does this matter?

There are significant consequences for failing to appropriately notify or seek SACSCOC approval for substantive changes. Potential consequences include:

- Loss of Title IV Funding
- Repayment of monies received from the U.S. Department of Education for programs related to the unreported substantive change
- Sanctions or removal from membership of the SACSCOC

What types of changes are considered substantive?

- Adding coursework or programs at a different level than what is currently approved
 - Ex. SHSU adding associate degrees
- Expanding degree programs that differ significantly from what is currently approved
 - Ex. SHSU adding a Doctor of Engineering degree
- Adding joint or dual degree programs
- Adding off-campus sites where 50% or more of a degree program is offered
- Adding programs to previously approved off-campus sites

What types of changes are considered Substantive? (cont.)

- Altering significantly the length of a program
 - Ex. Increasing the length of a master's program from 30 SCH to 48 SCH
- Acquiring any program or site from another institution

For a complete listing of substantive changes, please review the SACSCOC policy, "Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions"

What is the timeline for reporting substantive changes?

Depending upon the type of substantive change, the timeline for reporting them varies. For most substantive changes, notification or approval must occur prior to implementation, with some changes requiring a 6 month advance notification or approval.

The SACSCOC policy, "Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions," details specific notification and approval timelines for each change type.

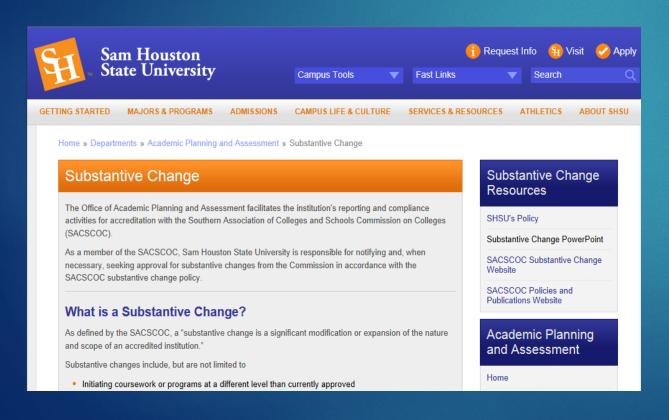
Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change

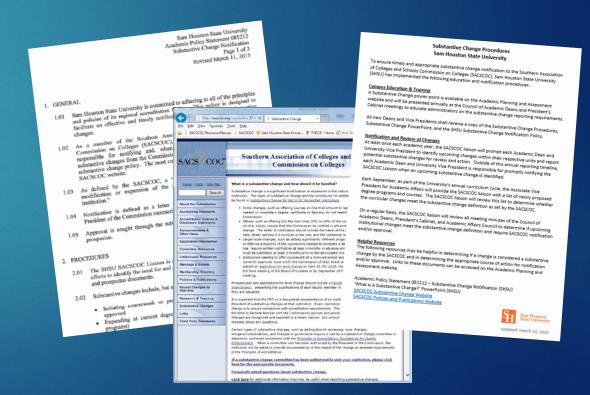
The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are included in the table that follows. Please read the full text under the appropriate procedure for details regarding reporting.

| Types of Change | Procedure | Prior Notification Required | Time Frame for Contacting COC | Prior Approval Required | Documentation |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved | 1 | NA | NA | Yes | Application for Level Change Due dates: April 8 or September 15 |
| Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs) | 1 | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |

Where can I find additional information?

The Office of Academic Planning and Assessment provides information relating to substantive changes on its website.





Questions?

If you have questions, or if you're not sure if an upcoming change is considered substantive, please contact the SHSU SACSCOC liaison.

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