



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 (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>)	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.

The screenshot shows the Sam Houston State University website. The header includes the university logo and navigation links: Request Info, Visit, and Apply. Below the header is a menu with categories: GETTING STARTED, MAJORS & PROGRAMS, ADMISSIONS, CAMPUS LIFE & CULTURE, SERVICES & RESOURCES, ATHLETICS, and ABOUT SHSU. The main content area is titled "Substantive Change" and includes the following text:

The Office of Academic Planning and Assessment facilitates the institution's reporting and compliance activities for accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

As a member of the SACSCOC, Sam Houston State University is responsible for notifying and, when necessary, seeking approval for substantive changes from the Commission in accordance with the SACSCOC substantive change policy.

What is a Substantive Change?

As defined by the SACSCOC, a "substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution."

Substantive changes include, but are not limited to

- Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved

On the right side of the page, there are three resource boxes:

- Substantive Change Resources**
 - SHSU's Policy
 - Substantive Change PowerPoint
 - SACSCOC Substantive Change Website
 - SACSCOC Policies and Publications Website
- Academic Planning and Assessment**
 - Home

This collage features three documents:

- Sam Houston State University Academic Policy Statement 081212 Substantive Change Notification** (Revised March 11, 2015). This document outlines the university's commitment to adhering to all principles of the policy designed to facilitate an effective and timely notification process.
- SACSCOC Substantive Change Website**. This document provides information about the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) website, including sections for "What is a substantive change and how should it be handled?", "About the Commission", and "Prospectuses and applications for level change should include a faculty nomination, presenting the qualifications of each faculty member in their area assigned."
- Substantive Change Procedures Sam Houston State University**. This document details the process for ensuring timely and appropriate notification to the SACSCOC, including sections for "Campus Education & Training", "Notification and Review of Changes", and "Helpful Resources".

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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