

Substantive Change Policy for Institutional Accreditation

University of North Alabama

Purpose

The University of North Alabama (UNA) is obligated to comply with the substantive change requirements of the U.S. Department of Education (34 C.F.R. § 602.22). Substantive change refers to any “significant modification of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the University’s regional accreditor, maintains oversight of institutional compliance with this regulation. SACSCOC’s Substantive Change Policy also addresses program-level changes that require institutions to notify SACSCOC in a timely manner and, under some conditions, to obtain approval prior to implementation.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with SACSCOC Substantive Change policy by identifying mandatory procedures for identifying, documenting and reporting substantive changes to SACSCOC.

Audience

This policy applies to all colleges, departments and units in the University, including both academic and non-academic. Within academic areas, potential substantive changes may originate with faculty, departments or deans, associate deans and/or the Provost. In areas outside of Academic Affairs, potential substantive changes may originate with individual units, management teams and/or vice presidents. Each individual hereby designated is required to understand and to fully comply with this policy.

Compliance

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with SACSCOC, the University’s regional accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation entitles its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. Failure to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures may result in adverse accreditation actions for the institution, such as sanctions, loss of Title IV funding, or being required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse funds received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change.

Definition of Terms

Substantive Change: A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope

of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes revisions to the mission, legal status, or control of the institution; the addition of courses or programs that are significant departures from current offerings; establishment of off-campus instructional sites; program closures; collaborative academic or contractual arrangements with other institutions or entities; and related actions. SACSCOC specifies additional types of substantive changes that must also be reported and/or approved before implementation.

Significant Departure: A program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or off-campus site in terms of content or mode of delivery proposed.

SACSCOC Liaison: The individual designated by the President to serve as the University's representative to SACSCOC and to coordinate communications concerning substantive change and other accreditation requirements.

Request for Substantive Change Review: A request submitted to the SACSCOC Liaison by a dean or designee to determine if a proposed program action would be considered a substantive change under current SACSCOC policy and to confirm the requirements for ensuring compliance. This submission is made in Courseleaf and must follow University protocols and approvals for proposed programs and program changes.

Policies and Procedures

All proposed changes related to academic for-credit programs must be submitted to the University's SACSCOC Liaison for review through Courseleaf to determine whether the proposed changes are included in any of the categories for which SACSCOC requires prior notification or approval. The Courseleaf submission must include the title of the proposed change, a brief description of and rationale for the proposed change, the expected implementation date, and any proposals or other documentation (i.e., ACHE proposals) prepared as part of the University's internal program approval process. The SACSCOC Liaison will review the proposed change in relation to current SACSCOC policies and document in Courseleaf whether the change is substantive according to SACSCOC current policy. If the change is substantive, the Liaison will provide advice concerning requirements and dates by which a notification or prospectus must be submitted and will work with the program Dean or designee to prepare the documentation and letter of transmittal for the President's signature. The SACSCOC Liaison will submit all substantive changes to SACSCOC on behalf of the University.

This policy, current SACSCOC policy, instructions, and contact information for the SACSCOC Liaison are provided on the UNA website at <https://www.una.edu/sacs/index.html>. To ensure that SACSCOC reporting deadlines are met, questions and requests for review should be directed to the SACSCOC Liaison as early as possible in the planning process.

The current SACSCOC policy on Substantive Change and listing of changes that must be reported or approved is available at: <https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>

Policy Roles and Responsibilities

Responsible Office: SACSCOC Liaison/Academic Affairs

Responsible Executive: University President

Responsible Officer: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs informs deans of substantive change policies and maintains on its website the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy, UNA policies and procedures for compliance, and instructions for submitting a substantive change review to the SACSCOC Liaison.

The SACSCOC Liaison maintains current information on SACSCOC Substantive Change policies; communicates and interprets those policies to the campus community; confers with SACSCOC staff to confirm application of policies to specific situations and prepares documents, notifications, and requests for SACSCOC approval for the Provost and/or President's signature.

Related Regulations, Statutes and Policies

U.S. Department of Education Regulations Concerning Substantive Change (34 C.F.R. §602.22.):

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/hea08/34cfr602.pdf>
(please see page 12).

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement (subject to change without notice):
<https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>

University of North Alabama Substantive Change Policy for Institutional Accreditation, located on the website of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at <https://www.una.edu/sacs/index.html>.

Document History

- Initial approval by the UNA Council of Academic Deans: February 13, 2012
- Initial approval by the UNA President: August 30, 2012
- Reviewed, revised and approved: 2013, 2016, 2021 and 2022
- Most recent revision: October 2022
- Approved by Institutional Effectiveness Committee on 11-7-22, Faculty Senate on 11-10-22, Staff Senate on 11-14-22, SGA on 11-21-22, SGEC on 11-28-22, and President Kitts on 11-29-22

This policy is subject to change without notice in response to U.S. Department of Education and/or SACSCOC policy revisions.