**Georgia College & State University**

Proposed Policy to Address **Substantive Change Requirements**

(<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>)

Policy:

Georgia College & State University is required to comply with the SACS Substantive Change policy as a condition of its continued accreditation by SACS. Substantive change is defined by SACS as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” Examples of substantive change may include, but are not limited to, establishing a new site at which students can earn 50% or more of the credits toward a GC degree, or creating a joint program with another institution through which GC credit may be earned.

Policy Statement:

As part of the requirement for regional accreditation, Georgia College & State University (GC) is obligated to follow the substantive change procedures of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC or SACS) and to inform SACS of any changes in its programs and activities in accordance with those procedures. This policy establishes assurance that GC remains in compliance with these requirements.

Definitions:

SACS- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Substantive Change- a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes

* Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
* Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
* The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
* The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution’s current accreditation or reaffirmation.
* A change from clock hours to credit hours
* A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
* The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.
* The establishment of a branch campus
* Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
* Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree program or a joint degree program with another institution
* Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
* Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
* Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution’s programs

Keywords:

Substantive Change to Academic Programs

Reason for the Policy:

Recent changes in SACS standards make it mandatory for institutions to have a policy related to conforming to SACS standards.

Proposed Outcome:

The major outcome is for the institution to comply with SACS standards with an appropriate policy. Additionally, the policy will provide more clarity and help guide program developers as program curricula are modified, new programs are added, delivery methods are changed, or programs are delivered in new locations.

This policy does not change current practice; rather it explicitly outlines existing practices and aligns GC with SACS requirements.

Applicability of the Policy:

This policy applies to all academic programs in all GC colleges and departments. It is designed to provide more clarity to those who develop, manage, and lead academic curricula development and program review.

Related Policies:

none

Procedures:

The guidelines for carrying out the policy will follow current program and curriculum approval processes. The Provost office is ultimately responsible for SACS compliance as it relates to academic programs.

Forms:

none

Contacts:

The policy was created by the Provost and is submitted to the ECUS for routing and feedback.

Responsibilities:

Department Chairs and Collegiate Deans share the responsibility to be aware of the general substantive change policy, inform the University’s SACS Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the University, and provide the SACS Liaison with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACS policy when requested.

Procedures and Responsibilities of the SACS Liaison with regard to this policy:

* The SACS Liaison will provide the appropriate Department Chair and Dean with information about the SACS substantive change policy. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining an appropriate and accurate file related to substantive change and providing information about substantive change upon request;
* The SACS Liaison will work with the Department Chair and Dean to determine whether a proposed change is substantive;
* The SACS Liaison will determine what action with respect to SACS is needed when a change is substantive;
* The SACS Liaison will file the appropriate notice or prospectus with SACS;
* The SACS Liaison will coordinate with SACS and the appropriate GC representative about any required follow-up action.

Procedure

Notification of SACS of Proposed Changes

If a change is substantive, SACS must be notified as much as 12 months in advance of implementing the change. Upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may be substantive, the Department Chair and Dean will provide the GC SACS Liaison all information needed to prepare a letter of notification to SACS. All correspondence to SACS regarding substantial change is reviewed by the Provost and signed by the President. The SACS liaison will also coordinate with the Provost to make certain the USG has received appropriate notification of substantive change, if that notification is required by USG policy.

Late Notification

If it is discovered that a change affecting a program or an activity which may be considered a substantive change has been implemented, notification of SACS Liaison, the Provost and appropriate Dean and Chair or Director will be required to work closely and immediately with the SACS Liaison to rectify the situation.

Guidelines (updated 2012)

SACSCOC Policy on Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions on Colleges

**Examples of Types of Substantive Change and Procedures**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Change** | **Prior Notification Required?** | **Time Frame for Contacting SACS** | **Prior Approval Required** | **Documentation** |
| Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved | Yes | 12 Months | Yes | Application for Level ChangeDue Dates: 4/15 or 10/1 |
| Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs) | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |
| Initiating a branch campus | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |
| Initiating a Certificate program (example, workforce development)…Using existing courses…At a new off campus site (previously approved location)…that is a significant departure from previously approved programs | NAYesYes | NAApproval required prior to implementationApproval required prior to implementation | NAYesYes | NoneProspectusProspectus |
| Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School programs)…Student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program…Student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit…Student can obtain 24 percent or less | YesYesNA | 6 monthsPrior to implementation NA | YesNo NA | ProspectusLetter of NotificationNone |
| Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites…adding programs that are significantly different from current programs…adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs | YesNA | Prior to implementationNA | NoNA | Letter of NotificationNA |
| Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |
| Initiating distance learning…offering 50 percent or more of a program (Note: Once approved, institutions may add programs that are significant departures from originally approved programs by submitting notification in advance)…offering 25-49 percent of program…offering 24 percent or less | YesYesNA | 6 monthsPrior to implementationNA | YesNoNA | ProspectusLetter of notificationNone |
| Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium | Yes | Prior to implementation | No | Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement |
| Initiating a merger or consolidation with another institution | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus due April 15 or October 1 |
| Relocating a main branch campus | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |
| Relocating an off-campus instructional site | Yes | Prior to implementation | No  | Letter of Notification |
| Changing governance, ownership, control or legal status of institution | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |
| Changing clock hours to credit hours | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |
| Altering significantly the length of a program | Yes | 6 months | Yes  | Prospectus |
| Initiating degree completion programs | Yes | 6 months | Yes | Prospectus |
| Closing an institution or program (see policy for details)…closing a program with internal teach out protocol…closing a program with teach-out agreement with another institution…closing an institution | YesYesYes | Prior to implementation6 monthsPrior to implementation | YesYesNo | Description of PlanCopy of agreementDescription of plan |

**Definitions:**

A significant departure in program is one in which the proposed new program has no closely related counterpart among the previously approved programs in the curriculum. To determine if a new program is a “significant departure,” it is helpful to ask if the new program requires:

* Numbers of new faculty
* Many new courses
* New library or other learning resources needed
* New equipment or facilities needed
* New funding resources needed?

Significant changes in mission are those that lead to a fundamental shift in the nature of the institution, such as an institution that had offered only professional programs deciding to add general education.

Significant changes in program length are those with noticeable impact on the program’s completion time (e.g., increasing baccalaureate degree from 124 to 150 hours).