



Eastern Kentucky University Policy and Regulation Library

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Section 3, Substantive Change to Academic
Programming

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Responsible Executive: Provost

Responsible Office(s): SACSCOC Liaison

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Substantive Change to Academic Programming

Policy Statement

Before initiating any significant changes in academic programming—such as adding a new degree program, delivering an existing on-campus program in a distance/online mode, offering a program at a higher degree or credential level, or offering an existing program in a new location, among others—the college/department/unit initiating the change must notify the Substantive Change Officer (SCO) as soon as such a change is considered. Additionally, the SCO will review each proposal made to the Council on Academic Affairs (CAA) to determine if it should be considered a substantive change and therefore need to go through the notification and/or approval processes for SACSCOC and any program-specific accreditors. In the event of a dispute as to whether a proposed change is considered substantive in nature, final review of the proposed change will be the responsibility of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Purpose

This requirement is intended to ensure compliance with external accreditation requirements, including those of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and any relevant program-specific accrediting agency. Depending on the scope of the initiative, several months or longer lead time is necessary to meet accreditation standards of notification and approval before the change can be implemented.

Entities Affected

- Colleges
- Departments
- Units initiating significant changes in academic or institutional programming

Background

Accreditors, such as SACSCOC, require prior notification and, in some cases, prior approval of academic changes they deem substantive. Failure to provide the required notification or to seek the prior approval from the accrediting body can be considered non-compliant and can result in sanctions; therefore, Eastern Kentucky University has established this policy in order to ensure its compliance with the relevant principles of accreditation. Furthermore, this policy ensures that substantive changes are identified and that the required notifications are made and approvals sought. Finally, this policy will ensure that records of substantive changes to academic programs will be kept in one location in the University.

Procedures

1. **Identifying Substantive Changes**

a. **Notification of Substantive Change (By Department Chair to the Substantive Change Officer in the Provost Office)**

Department Chairs (or designee) with known or possible substantive changes to academic programming should notify the Substantive Change Officer (SCO) in writing that a change is being considered. Notification should include a detailed description of the change and a timeline for planned implementation of the change.

b. **Review of CAA Proposals**

The SCO will also review each proposal to CAA before the formal meeting occurs in order to identify any substantive changes not already identified by the academic unit proposing the change. If such a proposal is identified, the SCO will notify the Chairperson of CAA before the formal meeting to ensure appropriate discussion and action on the proposal.

2. **Determination of Substantive Change**

The SCO will determine whether a change is substantive, in consultation with a SACSCOC staff member as needed, and will notify the Department Chair and the Dean of the decision.

3. **Develop Action Plan**

If a change is determined to be substantive, the SCO will work with the relevant parties to develop an action plan that will ensure compliance with the requirements of the accrediting body.

4. **Notification to SACS of Substantive Change**

The President will notify SACSCOC of substantive changes at the time and in the manner determined by SACS policy. Notification of program accrediting bodies will be made according to their regulations.

5. Feedback to Initiator

The SCO will inform the initiator of any decision made by the University or by accrediting bodies and may request additional information or action from the initiator.

Definitions

- **Distance Mode:** Delivery instruction method in which the majority of interaction between the instructor and students and among students occurs when the participants are not in the same location. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous and may involve the use of correspondence, audio, video, and/or computer technologies.
- **Higher Degree:** Degree levels based on ascending order: certificate, associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate.
- **Notification (per SACSCOC):** Notification constitutes a letter from the institution's chief executive officer to the President of the Commission summarizing the proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the street address, if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site.
- **Off-campus site:** Any location not on the Richmond campus.
- **On-campus site:** The Richmond, Kentucky campus.
- **Online Mode:** A distance delivery instruction method in which the majority of interaction between the instructor and students and among students occurs when the participants are not in the same location and when a web-based tool is used. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.
- **Substantive/Significant Change (EKU):** A considerable change in academic programming. This change includes but is not limited to:
 - adding a new degree program
 - delivering an existing on-campus program in a distance/online mode
 - offering a program at a higher degree or credential level
 - offering an existing program in a new location
- **Substantive Change (per SACSCOC):** A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.

Violations of the Policy

Failure to follow this policy may result in an academic program change being stopped or suspended until such time as the University can come into compliance with the policies of the accrediting body.

Institutional failure to follow the policy with regard to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools could result in the following: “the accreditation of the institution may be placed in jeopardy, the institution’s case may be referred to the Commission for the imposition of a sanction, or the institution may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for money received by the institution for unreported substantive changes.”

Interpreting Authority

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Review and Approval

Policy Revised

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Executive Assistant to the
Provost

ACTION

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