



I. Title:

Substantive Change Policy

II. Policy Statement:

As required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Alabama State University (ASU) will report in writing any actions described as a substantive change to SACSCOC prior to implementation. The purpose of this policy is to establish the requirements, processes and procedures set forth to monitor and report academic and administrative substantive changes to the Commission.

Member institutions are required to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely manner.¹ Failure to comply with this institutional substantive change policy may result in the institution's being placed on sanction (warning, probation, or loss of accreditation) at the time of SACSCOC Committee on Compliance and Reports' review.

III. Scope of Policy:

Alabama State University will ensure continued compliance with *Standard 14.2 (Substantive Change) of the Principles of Accreditation and with the Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* in its entirety as a member of SACSCOC, its regional accrediting body that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation entitles its members to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.

The Commission on Colleges accredits the entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. Accreditation, specific to an institution, is based on conditions existing at the time of the most recent evaluation and is not transferable to other institutions or entities.

When an accredited institution significantly modifies or expands its scope, changes the nature of its affiliation or its ownership, or merges with another institution, a substantive change review is required. The Commission is responsible for evaluating all substantive changes to assess the impact of the change on the institution's compliance with defined standards. If an institution fails to follow the Commission's procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its total accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. (See Commission policy "Substantive Change for

¹ [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)

Accredited Institutions.”) If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact Commission staff for consultation. An applicant, candidate, or member institution in litigation with the Commission may not undergo substantive change ([The Principles of Accreditation, p. 34](#)).

Alabama State University will ensure continued compliance with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). All substantive and non-substantive changes made to Alabama State University’s academic program inventory must be reported to ACHE prior to implementation. The Substantive Changes to the Academic Program Inventory require Commission approval as reasonable alterations of existing programs. The purpose of the Commission’s review and action on such proposal is to ensure that the requested change is reasonable in the context of the existing program and in terms of its impact. ACHE Forms must be used when making substantive and non-substantive changes (i.e., altering the CIP code, program title, degree nomenclature, program deletion, program inventory inactive status, and all changes in degree award nomenclature at the doctoral level.)

IV. Effective Date:

May 7, 2026

V. Audience:

All employees are expected to have knowledge and understanding of the substantive change policy.

VI. Designated Responsibilities and Applicability of Substantive Change Policy:

The SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, President, Provost, Associate Provost, Assistant Provost, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Associate Deans have designated responsibilities that are applicable to the substantive change policy as listed below:

- A. The SACSCOC Institutional **Accreditation Liaison** is an appointed position made by the President in consultation with the Provost to serve in this capacity for Alabama State University and shall ensure the following actions are performed as follows:
 - Provide the President, Vice Presidents, Provost, Associate Provost, Assistant Provost, Deans, Associate Deans and Directors with interpretation, information, and determination regarding the substantive change policy and the need to submit a change to SACSCOC;
 - Monitor the institutional actions that may be constituted as substantive change;
 - Determining the necessary action to report to SACSCOC when needing to report a substantive change;

- Develop the appropriate notification and documentation under the President’s purview for submission to SACSCOC;
 - Ensure that compliance with accreditation requirements is incorporated into the planning and evaluation process of the institution;
 - Assure the accuracy of all information submitted to SACSCOC to ensure ongoing compliance with the Commission standards, policies and procedures beyond reaffirmation;
 - Notify SACSCOC in advance of substantive changes and program developments in accordance with the substantive change policies of the Commission;
 - Familiarize faculty, staff, and students with SACSCOC's accrediting policies and procedures, and with particular sections of the accrediting standards and policies that have application to certain aspects of the campus (e.g., library, continuing education) especially when such documents are adopted or revised;
 - Serve as the University’s primary point-of-contact to SACSCOC staff. This duty includes encouraging institutional employees to route routine inquiries about the *Principles of Accreditation* and accreditation policies and processes through the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, who will contact SACSCOC staff, if necessary. The SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison will also monitor email communication from the SACSCOC office, assuring that emails are routed through the institution’s spam filter;
 - Coordinate the preparation of the annual profiles and any other reports requested by SACSCOC;
 - Serve as a resource person during the decennial, fifth-year, and other Commission review processes and help prepare for and coordinate reaffirmation and other accrediting visits, and
 - Maintain the formal institutional file of all accreditation materials, such as reports related to the decennial and fifth-year reviews; accreditation committee reports; accreditation manuals, standards, and policies; schedules of all visits; and correspondence from accrediting offices.
- B. The **President, Vice Presidents, Provost, Associate Provost, Assistant Provost, Deans, Associate Deans, and Directors** have a fundamental responsibility to
- Have a general knowledge of the substantive change policy and **recognize potential substantive changes**.
 - Inform the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison as soon as possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change;
 - Provide, when requested by the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, the information or data describing substantive change as necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy;

- Ensure that plans or initiatives support Alabama State University’s compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy;
- Incorporate this policy into daily operations and distribute the current Substantive Change Policy at annual meetings with the faculty and discuss its implications;
- **Provide any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with the SACSCOC policy when requested;**
- Provide a written report to the Provost on or before **May 15th or November 15th** that should confirm, in writing, that the College is in compliance with the University’s Substantive Change Policy and that the SACSCOC Institutional Summary is correct.

VII. Policy Management:

- Responsible Office: SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison, Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- Responsible Executive: President of Alabama State University
- Responsible Officer(s): Chief of Staff and/or SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison

VIII. Definition of Substantive Change:

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

- **Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.**
- **Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.**
- **Changing the governance of an institution.**
- **Merging/consolidating two or more institutions or entities.**
- **Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.**
- **Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including relocating a branch campus).**
- **Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.**
- **Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credentials).**
- **Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semester, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.**
- **Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.**
- **Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.**
- **Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.**

- **Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.**
- **Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the Title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.**
- **Substantially increase or decrease the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.**
- **Adding competency-based education programs.**
- **Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.**
- **Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.**
- **Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.**
- **Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.**
- **Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.**

IX. Procedures:

According to SACSCOC, it is the responsibility of Alabama State University to follow SACSCOC substantive change procedures and inform the Commission of substantive changes as specified in the SACSCOC.

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting timelines are included in the following table. The appropriate procedure for reporting proposed substantive curriculum changes are outlined in the *Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Changes* table.

It is the responsibility of an institution to follow SACSCOC substantive change procedures and inform SACSCOC of substantive changes as specified in those procedures. If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact SACSCOC staff for consultation. SACSCOC accredits institutions, not systems. While a system may provide SACSCOC with important information regarding changes planned or underway at its institutions, it is expected that each institution will follow the reporting requirements of the substantive change

policy as follows:

1. For any and every type of proposed action that will result in a substantive change, the procedures for reporting substantive change as outlined in *Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Changes Table* and the *ASU Course and New Program Approval Guide* and the SACSCOC policies on substantive change shall be strictly adhered to at all institutional levels.
2. The degree to which proposed changes represent a significant departure from current delivery modes of instruction should be made in consultation with the institutional SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison to accurately categorize the specific type of substantive change and to determine the procedures, timeframes and required documentation for accurate procedure on reporting substantive change to the SACSCOC.
3. The initial responsibility for determining and notifying a proposed program or outcome that will constitute a substantive change rests with the dean of the college from which the proposed program or outcome will be executed in consultation with the university's Accreditation Liaison, who will assist with facilitating formal inquiries with the SACSCOC.
4. Due to the timeframes that must be considered for SACSCOC review, approval and development of required documentation (i.e., prospectus, letter of notification), proposed actions that constitute a substantive change will require completion of appropriate forms and signatures verifying the approval of the program from the Board of Trustees, President, Provost, Dean, Department Chair, and SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison.
5. When a new program that is a significant departure from currently approved programs is approved by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, a prospectus must be submitted to the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison to accompany the prospectus that will be submitted to SACSCOC;
6. When a prospectus must be submitted to the SACSCOC, the development of the prospectus should focus on the following elements:
 - a. Abstract (limit to one page or less)
 - b. Background information
 - c. Assessment of Need and Program Planning/Approval
 - d. Description of the Change
 - e. Faculty
 - f. Library and Learning Resources
 - g. Student Support Services
 - h. Physical Resources
 - i. Financial Support
 - j. Evaluation and Assessment
 - k. Appendices
7. Formal communication of substantive change information to the SACSCOC for any proposed action rests with the President of the university
8. No proposed action resulting in a substantive change will be implemented prior to formal

receipt of approval from the SACSCOC.

9. In any instance whereby an unreported change should occur that is determined to be substantive to SACSCOC, the appropriate party must notify in writing the Chief of Staff and/or the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison. Upon receipt of notification, the President will be notified to determine the appropriate course of action per SACSCOC guidelines.

Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Changes:²

Type of Sub Change	Action Required by SACSCOC	By Whom in SACSCOC	Timeframe for submission to SACSCOC Prior to Planned Implementation	Documentation Required by SACSCOC	Timeframe for Notifying the University SACSCOC Liaison Prior to Implementation
<u>Program Changes</u>					
Cooperative Academic Agreement with Non-Title IV Entities- Between 25-50% of a program's content recorded on UF transcript	Approval	Senior Staff	January 1 changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior to implementation
Cooperative Academic Agreement with Non-Title IV Entities- Less than 25% of a program's content recorded on UF transcript	Notification		Any time before implementation	Notification and SACSCOC-required documentation	At least 3 months prior to implementation
Adding a method of delivery to an existing program (applies when 50% or more is delivered by that method)	Approval, if on Restriction; Notification, If not on restriction	Senior Staff	If Notification Only, any time before implementation. January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year	Notification and SACSCOC-required documentation	At least a month prior to implementation
Adding a new program with 50-100% new content (including certificates)	Approval	Senior Staff	January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented. January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior to implementation
Program closure (including certificates). Closure is defined as closed to admission or entry, not the cessation of instruction, i.e., closure date is when students can no longer start, not the date instruction ends.	Approval	Executive Council	January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented. January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year	Teach-out Plan	At least 10 months prior to implementation
Program Length Change. A change in program length in which credit hours increase or decrease by 25% or more AND students' expected time to completion increases or decreases by more than	Approval	Senior Staff	January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented.	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior to implementation

one term (including certificates)			January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year		
Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval, to participate institutions must: a. enter into an agreement with an oversight entity (as defined below) b. secure SACSCOC Prison Education Program (PEP) Institutional-level Approval, and c. secure federal approval.	Approval	Executive Council		Prospectus	At least 10 months prior to implementation
<u>Institutional Changes</u>					
Change to Measure of Student Progress to Completion. This includes changes from or to semester, trimester, or quarter academic calendars; time-based (i.e. calendar-based) or non-time based (i.e. competency-based) measures; and clock hour-based or credit hour-based measures.	Approval	Senior Staff	January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented. January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior to implementation
Governance Change. A governance change may include significantly altering governing board bylaws, the board's scope of authority or responsibility, the number of board members, or how board members are selected.	Notification + Approval	SACSCOC Board of Trustees	If Notification Only, any time before implementation. March 15 for review at the June meeting September 1 for review at the December meeting	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior implementation
Institution, Program, or Location Acquisition	Notification + Approval	SACSCOC Board of Trustees	If Notification Only, any time before implementation. March 15 for review at the June meeting September 1 for review at the December meeting	.	At least 10 months prior implementation
Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan. An institutional contingency teach-out plan must be	Approval	Executive Committee	January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same	Teach-out plan	At least 10 months prior implementation

<p>approved if any of the following occur:</p> <p>a. the institution is placed or continued on probation or probation for good cause by SACSCOC,</p> <p>b. SACSCOC acts to end the institution's accreditation,</p> <p>c. the institution's state authorization is revoked,</p> <p>d. the institution is on provisional certification for federal financial aid by U.S. Department of Education (USDE),</p> <p>e. the institution is on reimbursement for federal financial aid by USDE, or</p> <p>f. the institution is the subject of emergency action by USDE.</p>			<p>calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented.</p> <p>January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year</p>		
Merger/Consolidation	Notification + Approval	SACSCOC Board of Trustees	<p>If Notification Only, any time before implementation. March 15 for review at the June meeting</p> <p>September 1 for review at the December meeting</p>	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior implementation
Mission Change	Approval	Executive Committee	<p>January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year July 1 for changes to be implemented.</p> <p>January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year</p>	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior implementation
Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change	Notification + Approval	SACSCOC Board of Trustees	<p>If Notification Only, any time before implementation. March 15 for review at the June meeting</p> <p>September 1 for review at the December meeting</p>	Prospectus	At least 10 months prior implementation

X. Annual Audit:

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be responsible for monitoring all substantive changes. The Office will conduct an annual audit to ensure all academic courses and programs

are approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) prior to implementation. Additionally, an audit will be conducted to ensure all administrative substantive changes, (if any) are forwarded to the Commission.

XI. Substantive Change Committee:

Establish a Substantive Change Policy Review Committee that will be charged with recommending to the President recommended changes to the substantive change policy as necessary to comply with the SACSCOC standards and policies. The Committee will be chaired by the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison and include the following: the Chief of Staff, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, the Chair of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Graduate Dean, the Graduate Curriculum Chair, the Dean of the Levi Watkins Learning Center (LWLC), Director of Recruitment and Admissions, the Director of Continuing Education, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources, and a representative from the Office of Technology Services.

XII. Substantive Change Policy Training:

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will provide at least two substantive change policy workshops for faculty and staff annually. All Executive Administrators and Academic Officers, along with Department Chairs, are required to attend at least one workshop/training session annually.

XIII. Reporting Substantive and Non- Substantive:

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be responsible for assisting academic officers, department chairs and administrators with determining whether or not changes are substantive and ensure that they are reported to SACSCOC and/or ACHE.

XIV. Late Notification:

If Alabama State University fails to follow SACSCOC procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. For that reason, failure to follow this University policy must be avoided. If an academic program, unit or officer initiates a substantive change without following the procedures outlined in this policy, the President may direct the immediate cancellation or cessation of that change, with due regard for the educational welfare of students, when it is discovered. The President will ensure that SACSCOC is notified of non-reported substantive changes immediately upon discovery. If Alabama State University fails to follow ACHE procedures for notification of substantive and non-substantive changes the Provost will be responsible for informing the President and informing the Commission upon delivery.

XV. Exclusions:

No alterations of interpretation or exclusions of this University policy will be permitted by any employee (at any level).

XVI. Interpretation of Policy:

All questions about the interpretation of this substantive change policy should be directed to the University’s SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison. Consultation may be required for some questions or inquiries with the President, Provost or appropriate leader designated by the President and/or the institution’s assigned SACSCOC Vice President before giving a response.

XVII. Resources:

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement, [Substantive Change.pdf](#)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, [2024 Principles of Accreditation.pdf](#)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), The Accreditation Liaison, [Accreditation Liaison.doc](#)

Document History

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