

# Substantive Change Policy and Procedures

## Table of Contents



|                                                                                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Policy .....                                                                                                | 3  |
| Overview.....                                                                                                  | 3  |
| Compliance .....                                                                                               | 3  |
| Non-compliance.....                                                                                            | 5  |
| 2. Procedures.....                                                                                             | 6  |
| Using This Document .....                                                                                      | 6  |
| General Requirements.....                                                                                      | 8  |
| Specific Requirements by Substantive Change Type .....                                                         | 13 |
| Institutional Changes .....                                                                                    | 13 |
| Program Changes.....                                                                                           | 36 |
| Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes.....                                               | 51 |
| Other Changes.....                                                                                             | 61 |
| SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION .....                                                                           | 62 |
| Committee Visits .....                                                                                         | 64 |
| International Off-campus Instructional Sites .....                                                             | 66 |
| Fees and Expenses .....                                                                                        | 67 |
| Review Fee.....                                                                                                | 67 |
| Substantive Change Committee Visit Fee and Expenses .....                                                      | 67 |
| Unreported Substantive Change .....                                                                            | 68 |
| Review Procedures.....                                                                                         | 70 |
| Staff Options .....                                                                                            | 70 |
| Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review<br>of the Prospectus or Application.....   | 70 |
| Preparation for a Substantive Change Committee Visit .....                                                     | 71 |
| Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review<br>by a Substantive Change Committee ..... | 71 |
| Teach-outs.....                                                                                                | 71 |

*continued...*



3. Appendices..... 74

    Appendix A: What to Submit for Approvals ..... 74

        Common Content ..... 75

        Institutional Changes ..... 80

        Program Changes ..... 98

        Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes..... 106

        Other Changes..... 109

    Appendix B: Glossary..... 110

    Appendix C: Quick Reference ..... 113

        Substantive Change Types..... 113

        Conditions for SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION and for an  
            Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan ..... 115

    Appendix D: Summary of Recent Changes ..... 116



# 1. Policy

## Overview

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) substantive change policy and procedures assure the public that all aspects of an institution continue to meet standards. It helps ensure substantive changes, if approved, do not hinder an institution's ability to continue meeting the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*.

A substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services.

SACSCOC accredits an entire institution. Accreditation extends to all programs and services of an institution wherever located and however delivered. SACSCOC does not accredit individual programs, locations, or portions of an institution. However, some new programs, locations, and other institutional changes are subject to notification and/or approval as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

## Compliance

Substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- 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 a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs (i.e., credentials) 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 credential).
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, 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 decreasing 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.

Other substantive change requirements, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change.
- An institution is responsible for always maintaining compliance with Standard 14.2 (Substantive change) of the *Principles of Accreditation* and with the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* and related policies, viz.,
  - a. [Advertising and Student Recruitment](#) [PDF];
  - b. [Credit Hours](#) [PDF];
  - c. [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) [PDF];
  - d. [Distance and Correspondence Education](#) [PDF];
  - e. [Dual Enrollment](#) [PDF];
  - f. [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] and;
  - g. [Request for a Period of Noncompliance](#) [PDF].
- An institution is required to have a written substantive change policy and procedure. It must be approved through institutional processes and published in institutional documents accessible to those affected. The purpose of the institution's substantive change policy and procedure is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion as required by *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. Institutions are responsible for implementing and enforcing their substantive change policy and procedure.

- An institution’s fiscal and administrative capability to operate off-campus instructional sites is assessed when a new site is reviewed for approval and as part of reaffirmation and fifth-year interim reviews.
- A new off-campus instructional site is subject to a substantive change committee visit. A committee visit, when necessary, is authorized when a site is approved. The committee visit ensures the site has the personnel, facilities, and resources identified by an institution in its application or prospectus and ensures the quality of instructional and support services offered at the site.
- Different or additional requirements apply to an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION. Restriction applies if an institution has been placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause over the prior three academic years, or if an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs.
- An institution is required to submit an institutional contingency teach-out plan to SACSCOC within 30 days of notification if the institution is placed or continued on Probation or Probation for Good Cause, or if the institution meets conditions enumerated in the procedures section of this policy originating from the U.S. Department of Education or state authority.
- Numerous changes: Numerous substantive changes may accelerate an institution’s next reaffirmation of accreditation. Accelerated reaffirmation may be triggered by, but not limited to,
  - a. a significant change in the number of off-campus instructional sites including branch campuses,
  - b. a significant change in the number of programs,
  - c. a significant change in enrollment, and
  - d. frequent mergers/consolidations or acquisitions.

## **Non-compliance**

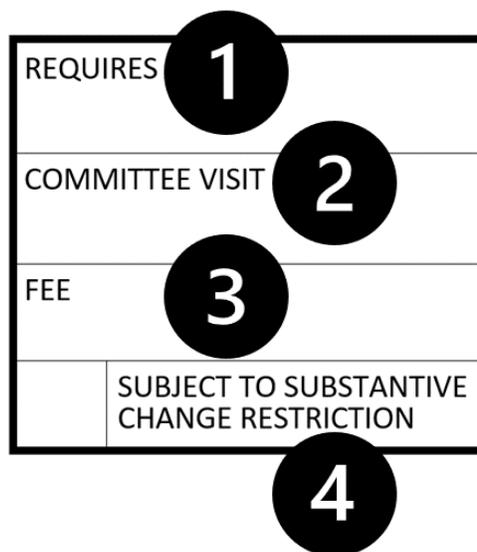
If an institution is non-compliant with *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* or Standard 14.2 (Substantive change), its accreditation may be in jeopardy. An unreported substantive change may require a review of the institution’s substantive change policy and procedures document by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Non-compliance subjects the institution to monitoring, sanction, or removal from membership. Failure to secure approval, if required, of a substantive change involving programs or locations that qualify for title IV federal funding may place the institution in jeopardy with the U.S. Department of Education, including reimbursement of funds received related to an unreported substantive change. For additional information, refer to *Unreported Substantive Change* in the procedures section of the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

## 2. Procedures

### Using This Document

Each substantive change type described in the procedures – for institutional changes, for program changes, and for off-campus instructional site changes – is accompanied by a graphical summary of the principal requirements:

1. The change requires either
  - Notification or
  - Approval
 and approval, if required, is by
  - Executive Council of the Board (year-round except December),
  - Full Board of Trustees (June or December), or
  - Senior Staff (year-round)



2. A committee visit is either
  - Required,
  - Contingent on institutional characteristics, or
  - Not required
3. A fee to review the substantive change is either
  - Yes or
  - No
 (see the Fee and Expenses section of the procedure for amounts; committee visit fees and expenses are additional and separate)
4. The type of substantive change is subject to additional or different requirements if the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION, either
  - Yes or
  - No

For each substantive change type – e.g., Off-campus Instructional Site Approval by Extensive Review, New Program-Approval, etc. – a



*What to submit*

section identifies and explains the information that must be submitted by the institution.

For a substantive change requiring

**Notification**, the  *What to submit* information is listed with the substantive change type description and explanation.

For a substantive change requiring

**Approval**, the  *What to submit* information is provided either in

- Appendix A: What to Submit for Approvals, listed by substantive change type, or
- the separate policy that covers certain types of substantive change such as a merger/consolidation, governance change, etc.; these are clearly noted under  *What to Submit* for these types of substantive change.



This document is designed for use in digital and print formats.

- All Table of Contents items are hyperlinked to their location in the document, but they may not display in hyperlink format, i.e., in blue and underlined.
- Hyperlinks may direct you to
  - a location in this document,
  - another document, or
  - a website.
- The up arrow in the header on each page is a hyperlink to the top of the document. 
- When accessing this document from the web, ensure the current version is accessed, i.e., not a saved (cached) copy. This is typically accomplished by clicking the browser's refresh button.
- When using a copy of the document – a digital or a printed copy – ensure the current version is used. Version dates are noted at the end of the document.



Monitor the [substantive change webpage](#) on the SACSCOC website for the most up-to-date information, reminders, and developments. Training and other materials available include

- a [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQs) webpage,
  - an [in-person workshops](#) information webpage,
  - announcements and updates,
  - short how-to videos,
  - substantive change webinars (live and on-demand),
  - updates to this and other policies, and
  - upcoming SACSCOC annual meeting sessions.
-

## General Requirements

General requirements universally apply to most or all types of substantive change. They address obligations and processes by an institution and by SACSCOC. Specific requirements are addressed by substantive change type, organized by institutional changes, off-campus instructional site / additional location changes, and program changes.

- **Accreditation cycle:** Some types of substantive change affect an institution's reaffirmation of accreditation cycle:
  - a. a merger/consolidation or change of ownership normally affects the reaffirmation cycle;
  - b. a change of governance, means of control, or legal status or form may affect the reaffirmation cycle;
  - c. acquiring a program(s) or site(s) from another institution normally will not affect the reaffirmation cycle;
  - d. all other types of substantive change normally will not affect the reaffirmation cycle;
  - e. numerous substantive changes may affect the reaffirmation cycle.
- **Appeal of substantive change decision:** A substantive change that is denied approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or senior staff is not appealable. All actions are final. An institution may revise and resubmit a prospectus or application without prejudice.
- **Appeal, litigation, and arbitration:** A SACSCOC accredited institution in the appeals process or in litigation or arbitration with SACSCOC is not eligible for substantive change.
- **Applicants and candidates:** Applicant and candidate institutions may not initiate substantive change. However, if required, an institutional contingency teach-out plan or an institution closure teach-out plan as described in policy applies to applicant and candidate institutions. The institutional contingency teach-out plan is addressed by candidate institutions in their Candidacy Report and not as a substantive change.
- **Approval date:** The approval date of a substantive change is the date of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees' action to approve. A substantive change is included in the scope of the institution's accreditation as of the approval date. Substantive changes are not approved retroactively.
- **Review pathways:** Approval, or denial of approval, of a proposed substantive change is granted by:
  - a. the full Board of Trustees,
  - b. the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees on behalf of the full Board, or

- c. senior staff, typically the SACSCOC president, as delegate by the Board of Trustees.\*

The types of substantive changes reviewed by the full Board, the Executive Council of the Board, and senior staff are defined in the section of the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* that addresses specific substantive changes. Exceptions are noted below.

The full Board of Trustees meets biannually, typically in June and December. The Executive Council of the Board of Trustees meets every two weeks except December through mid-January. Senior staff reviews are continual and as-needed. Published submission deadlines apply.

### **Exceptions:**

There are exceptions, based on the conditions or characteristics of an institution, which require review and action by the full Board of Trustees rather than the Executive Council of the Board or senior staff.

Review by the full Board of Trustees is required if any of the following apply:

- a. An institution is on sanction (Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause) at the time the substantive change prospectus or application is submitted.

#### *Exceptions:*

- i. If an institution submitted a substantive change prospectus or application and is subsequently placed on sanction, the proposed change may be referred to the full Board of Trustees or may, at the sole discretion of SACSCOC staff, be reviewed by staff and referred to the Executive Council of the Board or to senior staff for action.
- ii. A substantive change
  1. to close a program, a site, a program at a site, or a method of delivery;
  2. for an implementation extension;
  3. for an institutional contingency teach-out plan; or
  4. for an institution closure

may be reviewed by staff and referred to the Executive Council of the Board for action even if the institution is on sanction. The institution's sanction status is disclosed to the Executive Council at the time of review.

- b. An institution has recently been removed from sanction for non-compliance with Standards 13.1 (Financial resources), 13.2 (Financial documents), or 13.3 (Financial responsibility).
- **Deadlines:** Substantive change prospectus, application, and notification submission deadlines depend on (1) the type of SACSCOC Board of Trustees or senior staff review, if

---

\* As permitted under 34 C.F.R. § 602.22(a)(2)(i) for federally-define substantive changes

required (see also review pathways explained herein), and (2) the intended implementation date of the substantive change.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the full Board of Trustees (which meets biannually), to be implemented after the date of the Board meeting, the submission deadlines are

- **March 15** for review at the Board’s biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year, and
- **September 1** for review at the Board’s biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (which meets year-round) or by senior staff, the submission deadlines are

- **January 1** for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year, and
- **July 1** for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring notification only, it can be submitted any time before implementation. Once the institution has submitted notification, it may implement before receiving a response from SACSCOC. If there are deficiencies or additional information needed about the notification, the institutional liaison will be contacted at the time of review for resolution and before action is taken. This applies to notifications only, not to approvals: changes requiring approval cannot be implemented until approved by SACSCOC.

For a substantive change to close a program, site, program at a site, or method of delivery, a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close (i.e., stop admitting students).

- **Deferral:** A substantive change submission reviewed by staff may be deferred for additional information or explanation from the institution. If, after review and two deferrals, staff in its sole judgment does not have a sufficient basis to accept notification or recommend approval, then the notification, prospectus or application will be referred to the full Board of Trustees at its earliest possible regularly scheduled biannual meeting. The institution has a maximum of 180 days to respond to a deferral; otherwise, the submission is rejected. The institution may revise and resubmit at its discretion.
- **Disclosure:** At the time a substantive change is submitted, the institution is required to disclose if the institution is currently on provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 668.13.
- **Implementation dates:** The implementation date is when an institution begins the material, public, non-reversible, or other significant actions of a substantive change. Examples include changing an institution’s measure of student progress to completion, admitting

students to a new program, starting instruction at a new off-campus instructional site, and others.

The *intended* implementation date is an institution's forward-looking good faith estimate of when it will begin a substantive change. The intended implementation date is provided by the institution when a substantive change is submitted for review.

If a substantive change has already been implemented when an institution submits a substantive change, or if the institution implements a substantive change after submission but before receiving approval, then the change is considered an unreported substantive change and the institution is non-compliant with Standard 14.2 (substantive change). Refer to the *Non-compliance* section of this policy for additional guidance. If a substantive change has already been implemented at the time a notification or prospectus is submitted -- i.e., the institution is submitting a known unreported substantive change -- then the institution should report the actual implementation date as the intended implementation date in its submission.

Although SACSCOC may approve a substantive change after implementation as an unreported substantive change, approval is not retroactive to the actual implementation date. For mergers/consolidations and acquisitions and changes in ownership, implementation must occur within 30 days of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval.

- **Implementation time limit:** Approved substantive changes – except for those changes that must be implemented within 30 days as defined in policy – must be implemented within two years of the approval date. If an institution does not implement within two years of approval, then a new prospectus or application must be submitted and approved prior to implementation. An institution may request an implementation extension for cause, subject to SACSCOC approval; see *Implementation Extension* in this policy for guidance.
- **Maintaining off-campus instructional site / additional locations accuracy and completeness:** An institution is obligated to maintain an accurate record with SACSCOC of off-campus instructional site names and addresses. A site name change, address change, site re-open, or site relocation is managed through the Institutional Portal *without* submitting a substantive change. Updating site names, addresses, relocations or closures on the Institutional Summary Form submitted as part of reaffirmation or fifth-year interim reviews is insufficient to affect a change in the SACSCOC database of off-campus instructional sites. If the institution identifies an error in a site record, the SACSCOC staff will work with the institution to resolve.
- **Marketing, advertising, recruitment, and admissions:** Substantive changes are subject to SACSCOC's [Advertising and Student Recruitment](#) policy. Admission applications may be taken for substantive changes pending approval, but admission offers – including contingent offers – should not be made until the substantive change is approved by SACSCOC.
- **Non-enumerated changes:** SACSCOC reserves the right to consider an institutional change, or a group of changes, as constituting a substantive change even if not specifically identified in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. SACSCOC may require an institution to

submit materials related to the change(s) for review by staff and for possible review and action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. A substantive change committee visit may be authorized.

- **Notification vs. approval:** Upon favorable review of a proposed substantive change, either
  - a. notification is accepted by staff, or
  - b. approval is granted by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or its senior staff designee.

SACSCOC cannot accept notification or approve changes not identified and required in policy. Institutions should not submit changes that are not identified in policy as requiring notification or approval; no action will be taken.

- **Possible non-compliance:** If the review of a substantive change notification, prospectus, or application suggests material non-compliance with any of the *Principles of Accreditation* or SACSCOC policies, SACSCOC reserves the right to further review. An institution may be required to submit materials related to the possible non-compliance for review by staff and for possible review and action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Further review may be warranted even if the related prospectus or application is withdrawn or if the substantive change is denied approval.
- **Right to reject:** Substantive change submissions for which an institution's documentation (a) does not match the substantive change type or (b) is materially insufficient may, at the sole discretion of staff, be rejected. An institution may revise its materials and re-submit the substantive change.
- **Systems:** Because SACSCOC accredits institutions and does not accredit systems, a substantive change must be submitted by an institution. Systems or state coordinating boards cannot submit a substantive change on institutions' behalf. System coordination across institutions is encouraged where practicable, yet individual institutions are responsible for their substantive change submissions.
- **Submission authority:** A substantive change may be submitted by the institution's chief executive office or accreditation liaison only.
- **Submission process:** All substantive changes (unless otherwise directed) must be submitted through the Institutional Portal. For guidance, refer to the [Documents Submitted for SACSCOC Review](#) policy, viz., Appendix A (Electronic Submission of Documents). An Institutional Portal *User Guide* is available in the portal.
- **Withdrawal:** An institution may withdraw a substantive change application, prospectus, or notification at any point during the review process. However, if a substantive change has been approved or notification accepted -- i.e., it has been completed -- it cannot be withdrawn.

## Specific Requirements by Substantive Change Type

### Institutional Changes

- [Acquisition](#) (p. 14)
  - [Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion](#) (p. 15)
  - [Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval](#) (p. 16)
  - [Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval](#) (p. 17)
  - [Governance Change](#) (p. 18)
  - [Institution Closure](#) (p. 19)
  - [Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan](#) (p. 21)
  - [Level Classification and Level Authorization](#) (p. 23)
    - [Definitions and Guidelines](#) (p. 23)
    - [Level Authorization Addition](#) (p. 25)
    - [Level Change to a Higher Level](#) (p. 26)
  - [Merger / Consolidation](#) (p. 29)
  - [Mission Change](#) (p. 30)
  - [Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change](#) (p. 31)
  - [Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval](#) (p. 32)
-

## Acquisition

|                 |                                              |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval<br/>Full Board of Trustees</b>   |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>Required</b>                              |
| FEE             | <b>Yes</b>                                   |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Acquisition is the sale, exchange, or transfer of a component of an institution's or entity's assets to a SACSCOC accredited institution. Following acquisition, the participating entities remain in operation as separate institutions or entities. Acquisition includes off-campus instructional sites, for-credit educational programs, or other tangible educational assets. Acquisition excludes assets unrelated to the core mission of the SACSCOC institution such as non-educational real estate and intangible property. Acquisition is independent of financial consideration; i.e., an acquisition may or may not

involve the exchange of money or other assets between participating entities. Acquisition requires SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval.

Upon acceptance or approval of the prospectus, a Substantive Change Committee visit will be authorized to review the institution's ongoing compliance with the Principles of Accreditation following implementation of the acquisition. The implementation or effective date must occur within 30 days of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval of the acquisition. Acquisition normally does not affect the acquiring institution's reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.



*What to submit*

**A prospectus:** Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.



## Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion

|                 |                                              |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval<br/>Senior Staff</b>             |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                    |
| FEE             | <b>Yes</b>                                   |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

A change in the way an institution measures students' progress to completion requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. 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.

This substantive change addresses an *institutional-level* change across most or all of an institution's programs.

However, a *program-level* change in the measure of student progress, except for some competency-based education programs, is not a substantive change.

A change in measure of student progress must demonstrate

- conversion equivalency from the current measure to the new measure, and
- compliance with the SACSCOC *Credit Hours* policy and the *Principles of Accreditation* Standards 9.2 (Program length), 9.7 (Program requirements), 10.1 (Academic policies), and 10.7 (Policies for awarding credit).



*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion](#) (p. 80).



## Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval

|                 |                                              |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval<br/>Senior Staff</b>             |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                    |
| FEE             | <b>Yes</b>                                   |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

In a competency-based education (CBE) program using the course/credit-based approach, demonstrating competencies is embedded in a traditional curriculum with courses completed, credits earned, and a credential awarded. Students typically enroll in an academic term and course credits are awarded at the end of the term by demonstrating mastery of the competencies associated with a course. Students may accelerate learning and demonstration of competencies. Transcripts record courses and grades, though the institution may opt to maintain a separate transcript of competencies.

An institution's *first* program in which 50% or more of the program may be earned through the course/credit-based approach to CBE requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. This approves both the program and approves the institution to offer additional course/credit-based CBE programs subject to additional approvals or notifications described below.

After the institution is approved to offer its first course/credit-based CBE program, additional programs in which 50% or more is earned through course/credit-based CBE are subject to

- new program approval if it is a significant departure from the institution's existing programs,  
—OR—
- notification as an additional method of delivery for an existing program.

### *What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval](#) (p. 81).



## Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval

|                 |                                              |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval</b><br>Senior Staff              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                    |
| FEE             | <b>Yes</b>                                   |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Distance education is a method of delivery in which 50% or more of instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same location. It includes synchronous (live or real-time) and asynchronous (not live or real-time) instruction.

An institution's *first* program in which 50% or more of the program may be earned by distance education requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. This approves both the program and approves the institution to offer distance education programs subject to additional approvals

or notifications described below.

*Exception:* An institution offering less than 50% of a program by distance education may, at its discretion, submit a prospectus for Distance Education - Institutional-level Approval. This will allow the institution to comply, as needed, with U.S. Department of Education (USDE) federal student aid or other entity requirements for distance education approval to offer programs in which less than 50% of the content is delivered by distance education.

After the institution is approved to offer its first distance education program, additional programs in which 50% or more is earned through distance education are subject to

- new program approval if it is a significant departure from the institution's existing programs,  
—OR—
- notification as an additional method of delivery for an existing program.



*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval](#) (p. 82).



## Governance Change

|                                                       |                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Approval</b><br>Full Board of Trustees |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>Required</b>                    |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>Yes</b>                                     |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                                             | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

An institutional governance change requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. 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. Only changing the composition of the board – i.e., replacing current board members with new members or other changes in accordance with established bylaws – does not usually constitute a governance change.

A substantive change committee visit is required and is authorized at the time of approval.

A governance change may affect the institution’s reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.

*What to submit*

**A prospectus:** Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.



## Institution Closure

|                 |                                               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval<br/>Exec Council of the Board</b> |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                     |
| FEE             | <b>No</b>                                     |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION  |

An institution ending all instruction requires an institution closure teach-out plan subject to SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval. Unlike an institutional contingency teach-out plan – which is a *precautionary* plan – an institution closure addresses *imminent* closure or closure expected with reasonable certainty. The teach-out plan must be submitted as soon as possible after closure becomes known or expected.

The teach-out plan details the institution’s process for orderly closure with primary emphasis on assisting students complete their programs of study with minimal disruption and additional costs. Institutions may teach-out their own programs, enter into teach-out agreements with other institutions, or both. For an institution with a gradual or phased teach-out plan, the teach-out period may extend several years.

The teach-out institution(s) – i.e., the institution(s) accepting displaced students from the closing institution – may request an exception to Standard 9.4 (institutional credits for an undergraduate degree) and/or Standard 9.5 (institutional credits for a graduate or professional degree) to accommodate students near the end of their program of study. Refer to the [Request for a Period of Noncompliance](#) policy for guidance. The closing institution should ensure the teach-out institution(s) are aware of this option and may wish to include it in any teach-out agreement(s) executed pursuant to the closure.

The teach-out plans

- provide reasonable completion options for all students in all programs, independent of how near or far the students are from completion,
- explain how the institution will provide for students’ and former students’ access to academic transcripts and other verification of academic credentials,
- identify the permanent repositor or trustee of student academic and financial aid records,
- describe the process and expected timeline for the disposition of assets,
- address any other provision identified by SACSCOC staff as essential to the successful closure of the institution based on the institution’s particular situation and in the interest of the affected students and former students.

*What to submit*

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an Institution Closure](#) (p. 83).



## Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan

|                 |                                                     |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval</b><br><b>Exec Council of the Board</b> |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                           |
| FEE             | <b>No</b>                                           |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION        |

A contingency teach-out plan is created in due diligence as a precaution rather than as an imminent closure plan. Should closure become necessary, the contingency teach-out plan becomes the institution closure plan, subject to revisions as warranted. The objective of a contingency teach-out plan is assurance of adequate institutional planning and SACSCOC concurrence for the benefit of students, faculty, and staff well in advance of immediate need. The contingency teach-out plan must detail, for each institutional program, how the institution will provide options for students to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption and additional costs, including identification of comparable programs and institutions. Teach-out agreements may be included.

### Conditions

An institutional contingency teach-out plan must be submitted and approved by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees if any of the following conditions occur:

1. the institution is placed or continued on probation or probation for good cause by SACSCOC;
2. SACSCOC acts to end the institution's accreditation;
3. the institution is on provisional certification for federal financial aid by U.S. Department of Education (USDE) —AND— the institution has been directed by USDE to submit a teach-out plan as a condition of participation;
4. the institution is on reimbursement for federal financial aid by USDE;
5. the institution is on heightened cash monitoring for federal financial aid by USDE;
6. the institution is the subject of USDE emergency action or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate the institution's participation in federal financial aid; *or*
7. the institution's state authorization is revoked.

### Exceptions for institutional credits for a degree

The teach-out institution(s) – i.e., the institution(s) accepting displaced students from the closing institution – may request an exception to Standard 9.4 (institutional credits for an undergraduate degree) and/or Standard 9.5 (institutional credits for a graduate or professional degree) to accommodate students near the end of their program of study. Refer to the [Request for a Period of Noncompliance](#) policy for guidance. The closing institution should ensure the teach-out institution(s) are aware of this option and may wish to include it in any teach-out agreement(s) executed pursuant to the closure. *Note:*

Requests for a period of noncompliance, if any, are made by the teach-out institutions(s), i.e., the receiving institution(s) to which students will transfer.



*What to submit*

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan](#) (p. 86).



## Level Classification and Level Authorization Definitions and Guidelines

(See also *Level Authorization Addition and Level Change to a Higher Level*)

### Definitions

- **Level classification:** An institutional status indicating the highest level for which an institution is approved to offer instruction and credentials.

Credentials include degrees and non-degree diplomas, certificates, and other generally recognized for-credit credentials.

Levels and their associated instruction and degree credentials, from lowest to highest, are:

- I Associate;
- II Baccalaureate;
- III Masters;
- IV Specialist;
- V Doctoral, offering one to three doctoral programs; and
- VI Doctoral, offering four or more doctoral programs.

An institution's level classification is denoted by the corresponding Roman numeral defined above.

Example: A Level II institution is approved to offer instruction and credentials at the baccalaureate level; it is not approved to offer instruction or credentials at the masters, specialist, or doctoral levels.

Non-degree credentials may be offered at any instructional level; e.g., an associate-level (freshman- and sophomore-level coursework) diploma, a masters-level certificate, etc. For further guidance, refer to the SACSCOC [Non-degree Credentials Position Statement](#).

An institution's level classification is not automatically inclusive of offering instruction and credentials at lower levels.

Example: A Level III institution is approved to offer instruction and credentials at the masters level; this does not automatically include authorization to offer instruction and credentials at the associate or baccalaureate levels. (See also level authorization.)

- **Level Authorization:** SACSCOC authorization for an institution to offer instruction and credentials at a level lower than the highest level for which an institution is approved to offer instruction and credentials.

An institution's level classification is not automatically inclusive of level authorization at lower levels.

Example: A Level VI institution is approved to offer instruction and credentials at the doctoral level. To offer programs at the associate, baccalaureate, specialist, or masters level, the institution must have level authorization to offer instruction and programs at each of the lower levels for which it awards a credential(s).

## Guidelines

1. An institution's current level classification and level authorization(s)
  - can be verified in the institutional portal, and
  - are publicly displayed on the SACSCOC website's institutional profile; after searching and selecting an institution, see
    - *Accreditation Information | Degree Level* for level classification, and
    - *General Information | Approved to Offer* for level authorization(s).
2. An institution is obligated to ensure its current level classification and level authorizations(s) are accurately maintained in SACSCOC records via the procedures described in this document.
3. An institution submits a prospectus and secures approval prior to implementation of a
  - Level Authorization Addition or a
  - Level Change to a Higher Level.
4. An institution updates, via the Institutional Portal, a
  - level authorization removal or a
  - level change to a lower level.

after all instruction has ended for all programs at a given level.
5. A Level Authorization Addition or a Level Change to a Higher Level cannot be accomplished by re-opening or re-initiating a program previously approved for closure.



## Level Authorization Addition

(See also *Level Classification and Level Authorization Definitions and Guidelines*)

|                                                                 |                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Approval</b><br><b>Exec Council of the Board</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>No</b>                                    |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>Yes</b>                                               |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                                                       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Read the *Level Classification and Level Authorization Definitions and Guidelines* section of the procedures. It provides context for this substantive change type and guidance on confirming the institution's current level authorization(s) before submitting a substantive change.

Level authorization is required for an institution to offer instruction and credentials at a level lower than the highest level for which the institution is approved and for which the institution is not currently authorized.

After an institution is authorized to offer instruction and credentials at a level, no further authorization is required to add additional instruction or credentials at that level. However, all other substantive change requirements apply without exception to subsequent programs at that level, viz., New Program Approval if the criteria are met.

The institution, through a prospectus, demonstrates its institutional capacity, financial resources, faculty qualifications and sufficiency, and adequate planning to support offering instruction and credentials at the proposed level. Each program to be offered at the proposed level within the first year of implementation is addressed in the prospectus. A level authorization addition requires approval prior to implementation.

Although a substantive change committee visit is not required for a level authorization addition, a committee visit may be authorized at the SACSCOC Board of Trustees' discretion.

An institution may request one level authorization addition only in a single submission. Requests for multiple level authorization additions must be separately submitted but can be submitted concurrently.



### *What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Level Authorization Addition](#) (p. 90).



## Level Change to a Higher Level

(See also *Level Classification and Level Authorization Definitions and Guidelines*)

(For Level V to Level VI level change, see the special instructions at the end of this section)

|                               |                                           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES                      |                                           |
| <b>Approval</b>               |                                           |
| <b>Full Board of Trustees</b> |                                           |
| COMMITTEE VISIT               |                                           |
| <b>Required</b>               |                                           |
| FEE                           |                                           |
| <b>Yes</b>                    |                                           |
| <b>No</b>                     | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Read the *Level Classification and Level Authorization Definitions and Guidelines* section of the procedures. It provides context for this substantive change type.

If an institution intends to offer instruction or credentials at a level higher than that for which it is currently approved, then approval of a level change to a higher level is required.

A level change to a higher level represents a significant change in the scope of an institution that has far-reaching implications including new and different institutional effectiveness obligations, resources (including faculty sufficiency and qualifications, financial, and library and learning/information), services (information technology, recruiting and admission, student support, e.g.) and more. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees evaluates an institution's level change prospectus to ensure it

- a) demonstrates adequate planning, resources, and readiness to implement the change relative to the criteria articulated in this policy and
- b) reasonably demonstrates that implementation of the level change will not place the institution in material jeopardy of being unable to maintain compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* or SACSCOC's policies for accredited institutions.

Approval of a level change to a higher level includes approval of the first program or programs to be offered at the higher level. As such, the prospectus must separately address new program approval requirements for *each* program at the proposed higher level to be offered in the first year of implementation after approval. Therefore, the prospectus may include more than one program; however, the institution should be aware that the SACSCOC Board of Trustees may deny approval of a level change if any one program (or more) included in the prospectus does not meet all new program and level change requirements.

An institution's new level classification is effective as of the date of the Board of Trustees approval of the level change to a higher level. The institution is reminded to update all occurrences of its statement for accredited institutions to accurately represent its status with SACSCOC to the public. Refer to the *Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure* policy for guidance.

A substantive change committee visit is required after the implementation of a level change to a higher level. The committee visit is authorized by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees at the time the level change is approved. The visit generally occurs no more than six months after implementation of the new program(s) at the newly-approved level. The

committee is charged with determining the institution's on-going compliance with select standards following implementation of program(s) at the new level.

***Important:*** An institution may not implement additional programs at the newly-approved level classification until after the SACSCOC Board of Trustees takes positive action on the report of the level change substantive change committee visit at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board (typically in June and December).

If an institution does not implement a level change within two years of approval, commencing on the date of the Board's action to approve, then the institution must submit a request in writing to the SACSCOC president to rescind the level change approval and rescind the authorization of the substantive change committee visit. Upon rescission, the institution's level classification will revert to its previous status or the current highest level for which it offers instruction and credentials. An institution may request an implementation extension for cause, subject to SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval; see Implementation Extension in the substantive change policy and procedures and contact a substantive change staff member for guidance if needed.

An institution may not offer coursework at a level higher than its current level classification in anticipation of securing level change approval.

The institution is reminded to update all occurrences of its statement for accredited institutions to accurately represent its status with SACSCOC to the public. Refer to the *Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure* policy for guidance.

### **Special Instructions for Level Change from Level V to Level VI**

A level change from Level V (offering one to three doctoral programs) to Level VI (offering four or more doctoral programs) does not require a level change prospectus, Board of Trustees review and approval, or a committee visit. Because the distinction between Level V and Level VI is solely the number of doctoral programs currently offered by an institution, a level change from Level V to Level VI is an administrative change only and is managed by the substantive change staff. After the institution receives SACSCOC new program approval, if necessary, and implements its fourth doctoral program (i.e., after students have matriculated), the institution may contact the substantive change office or the SACSCOC vice president assigned to the institution for guidance. The change will be documented in SACSCOC records, the institution will receive written confirmation, and the public SACSCOC website will reflect the institution's updated level.

*Note:* If an institution closes a doctoral program or programs such that it offers one to three doctoral programs —OR— if an institution closes all doctoral programs, then the institution is obligated to update its current level via the Institutional Portal.

*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Level Change to a Higher Level](#) (p. 92).



## Merger / Consolidation

|                                                       |                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Approval</b><br>Full Board of Trustees |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>Required</b>                    |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>Yes</b>                                     |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                                             | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Merger/consolidation is the sale, exchange, or transfer of all assets of at least one institution or entity to a SACSCOC accredited institution. Following a merger/consolidation, only one institution remains in operation as a separate institution or entity. Merger/consolidation is independent of financial consideration; i.e., a merger/consolidation may or may not involve the exchange of money between participating entities. A Substantive Change Committee visit is required and is authorized upon acceptance or approval of the prospectus. The Committee will review the institution's ongoing compliance with the *Principles of*

*Accreditation* following implementation of the merger/consolidation. The implementation or effective date must occur within 30 days of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval of the merger/consolidation. A merger/consolidation usually affects the resulting institution's reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.



*What to submit*

**A prospectus:** Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.



## Mission Change

|                 |                                                     |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval</b><br><b>Exec Council of the Board</b> |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                           |
| FEE             | <b>Yes</b>                                          |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION        |

A significant change in the established mission of an institution requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. A mission change fundamentally alters the character of an institution and its portfolio of academic programs or other mission-driven activities.

- An editorial change or re-wording of a mission statement that does not reflect a material change in mission is not a substantive change. This type of change does not require approval and should not be reported to SACSCOC.
- A mission change may be implicitly embedded or concurrent with other another type of substantive change requiring SACSCOC approval. Examples are a level change, a merger/consolidation, or establishing a program or portfolio of programs that changes the distinctiveness of an institution. This type of mission change typically does not require separate review and approval but should be clear in the prospectus or application for the other type of substantive change.

*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Mission Change](#) (p. 89).



## Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change

|                                                       |                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Approval</b><br>Full Board of Trustees |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>Required</b>                    |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>Yes</b>                                     |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                                             | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

An institutional change of ownership, change of institutional means of control, or change of institutional legal status requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

A substantive change committee visit is required and is authorized at the time of approval.

A change of ownership normally affects the institution's reaffirmation cycle. A change of the means of control or change of legal status may affect the institution's

reaffirmation cycle.

Refer to the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy for additional guidance including the approval process, prospectus requirements, and submission deadlines.



*What to submit*

**A prospectus:** Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in the [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF] policy.



## Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

|                                              |                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES                                     |                                              |
| <b>Approval</b><br>Exec Council of the Board |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT                              |                                              |
| <b>Required</b>                              |                                              |
| FEE                                          |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                                   |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                                   | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

The federal Prison Education Program (PEP) provides Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students. Institutional participation in the federal program is voluntary. To participate, institutions

1. enter into an agreement with an oversight entity (as defined below),
2. secure SACSCOC Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval, and
3. secure federal approval.

An institution must receive SACSCOC PEP approval for its first program at its first two PEP off-campus instructional sites.

SACSCOC reviews an institution’s capacity, financial stability, planning, and resources to initiate and sustain PEPs to ensure the quality and integrity of curricula, instruction, learning support, library and information resources, faculty qualifications, and plans to ensure ongoing comparability of PEP versus non-PEP programs. Approval is granted or denied by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

Because federal regulations require the review of an institution’s first two PEP off-campus instructional sites, an institution may need to submit more than one Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval prospectus. However, an institution may submit two sites in one PEP prospectus.

After an institution secures SACSCOC approval of its first two PEP off-campus instructional sites, it may initiate additional programs at those sites or at additional off-campus instructional sites with confined or incarcerated students without additional SACSCOC PEP approval. However, additional PEP programs or additional PEP sites may require SACSCOC notification or approval under *other non-PEP* substantive change requirements. For example, if an institution has secured SACSCOC PEP approval for two off-campus instructional sites where PEPs are delivered, no further *PEP approval* is required for a new off-campus instructional site offering PEPs; however, the new site will require SACSCOC off-campus instructional site approval prior to implementation if 50% or more of a program’s instruction is offered at the site.

An institution enters into a written agreement with an oversight entity or entities responsible for the site where the PEP will be delivered. The oversight entity may be a state department of corrections or other entity responsible for overseeing correctional facilities, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, or other oversight entity consistent with federal regulations. The content and expectations of the agreement are detailed in Appendix A of this policy (see *What to Submit* below). The institution is responsible for securing the agreement *before* submitting a PEP prospectus to SACSCOC; a copy of the signed final

written agreement is submitted as part of the prospectus. The institution is responsible for coordinating the approval processes and monitoring the program with (a) the oversight entity, (2) SACSCOC, and (3) the U.S. Department of Education.

SACSCOC PEP approval is required regardless of an institution's prior experience delivering instruction at a prison or other similar facility or prior experience delivering instruction to confined or incarcerated students. A PEP delivered at an already approved off-campus instructional site must go through the PEP approval process as an institution's first or second PEP site, but the site is not required to go through the off-campus instructional site approval process again.

All prisons or similar facilities with confined or incarcerated students — jails, juvenile justice facilities, penitentiaries, reformatories, work farms, and others — are considered off-campus instructional sites for PEPs regardless of the method of instructional delivery at the site (such as face-to-face, distance education, etc.).

An institution's SACSCOC financial responsibility score based on financial data submitted by an institution as part of its annual financial profile is included in the review. If the score suggests financial instability, the review may be deferred for additional information or denied approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.

The first two off-campus instructional sites reviewed as part of a PEP prospectus require a substantive change committee visit. The visit is authorized by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees at the time of the PEP approval. The visit is independent of any prior off-campus instructional site visits.

All other substantive change requirements, policies, and the *Principles of Accreditation* apply without exception to programs and off-campus instructional sites delivered as part of an institution's PEP.

Federal regulations stipulate:

1. Proprietary (for-profit) institutions are ineligible for PEP approval.
2. An institution subject to adverse action by SACSCOC
  - a. will have its PEP approval rescinded,
  - b. must submit teach-out plans for closure approval for all PEP programs and PEP off-campus instructional sites, and
  - c. is ineligible for PEP re-approval (by submitting a new PEP prospectus) for five years commencing on the date of the adverse action.
3. After its PEP approval, an institution adding a method of delivery not previously used in its PEPs must secure SACSCOC method of delivery approval prior to implementation; for more information, see Method of Delivery–Approval in this policy.

SACSCOC's PEP requirements are subject to revision as federal regulations and interpretations are updated.

Because new prison education programs *may* constitute multiple types of substantive change, an institution should carefully identify all associated substantive changes and coordinate their timing and submission to SACSCOC. Examples:

- If the PEP will be offered at a new off-campus instructional site, a separate Off-campus Instructional Site Approval prospectus is required.
- If the PEP will offer a new program with 50% or more new content not currently taught at the institution, a separate New Program–Approval prospectus is required.

Other substantive change types that may be associated with a PEP include

- Competency-based Education,
- Course/Credit-based Approach–Institutional-level Approval,
- Competency-based Education Direct Assessment–Approval,
- Distance Education–Institutional-level Approval,
- New Program–Approval,
- New Program–Notification,
- Off-campus Instructional Site Approval,

or other substantive change types as defined in the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* as determined by the institution.

PEP prospectuses will normally be reviewed by SACSCOC staff and referred to the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees for action. The submission deadline depends on the intended implementation date; those deadlines are contained elsewhere in this policy. However, if any existing SACSCOC policy requires an institution’s prospectus be reviewed by the Board of Trustees (typically in June or December), then those requirements and submission deadlines prevail.

If there are multiple substantive change types associated with a PEP, institutions are encouraged to contact the substantive change staff for guidance on the coordination and timing of multiple substantive change submissions. This is especially important if the PEP includes a new off-campus instructional site requiring approval by extensive review. In general, all related substantive change types requiring notification or approval must be settled before or concurrently with the review of the PEP prospectus.



#### *What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval](#) (p. 97).





---

*(End of Institutional Changes)*

## Program Changes

- [Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval](#) (p. 37)
  - [Cooperative Academic Arrangements](#) (p. 38)
    - [Definitions and Guidelines](#) (p. 38)
    - [Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval](#) (p. 40)
    - [Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification](#) (p. 41)
  - [Method of Delivery – Approval](#) (p. 43)
  - [Method of Delivery – Notification](#) (p. 44)
  - [New Program – Approval](#) (p. 46)
  - [Program Closure](#) (p. 47)
  - [Program Length Change](#) (p. 49)
-

**Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval**

*(See also Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based – Approval (institutional level change), and Method of Delivery - Notification.)*

|                                            |                                              |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES                                   |                                              |
| <b>Approval<br/>Full Board of Trustees</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT                            |                                              |
| <b>Required</b>                            |                                              |
| FEE                                        |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                                 |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                                  | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

A program in which 50% or more of the program may be earned through the direct assessment approach to competency-based education (CBE) requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. *Each* direct assessment CBE program requires SACSCOC approval, independent of prior direct assessment program approvals for the institution. A new direct assessment program is subject to determination of significant departure and, as warranted, approved as a new program concurrent with the direct assessment approval prior to implementation. Approval by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees is required. See also

[Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) policy [PDF].



*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval](#) (p. 98).



## Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines

There are two types of substantive change cooperative academic arrangements:

1. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval
2. Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification

The institution's approval and notification obligations are described below by type. The institution determines if an entity is a title IV entity or a non-title IV entity for the purposes of substantive change. Refer to the [definition of a program](#) in the Glossary.

### Definitions

For substantive change purposes only –

#### A title IV entity

- is certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs  
—OR—
- is an administrative organization or unit that administers or coordinates academic programs across multiple educational institutions or providers
  - —AND— does not provide or is not involved in aspects of educational instruction
  - —AND— all educational institutions or providers participating in the administrative organization are certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs.

#### A non-title IV entity

- is not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs  
—OR—
- is an administrative organization or unit that administers or coordinates academic programs across multiple educational institutions or providers
  - —AND— does provide or participates in aspects of educational instruction
  - —AND— one or more educational institutions or providers participating in the administrative organization is not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs.

### Guidelines

An administrative organization or unit as used in these definitions include, as examples,

- a department within a state higher education coordinating board,
- a unit under the direction of an institutional system's central office,
- a coalition of colleges sharing access to its members' existing instructional resources,
- and others.

### Determination examples

1. The entity is an educational institution certified to participate in title IV programs. For substantive change purposes, this is a title IV entity.
2. The entity is not certified for title IV but is an administrative unit of a state college system's governing board, the entity provides no instruction, and every college participating in the administrative unit is certified to participate in title IV programs. For substantive change purposes, this is a title IV entity.
3. The entity is not certified for title IV but is an administrative unit of a state's higher education coordinating board, the entity provides no instruction, and all but one college participating in the entity is certified to participate in title IV programs. For substantive change purposes, this is a non-title IV entity.
4. The entity is not certified for title IV but is a unit under the control of a university system's central office, the entity has hired some of the instructors providing instruction under the agreement, and every college participating in the entity is certified to participate in title IV programs: For substantive change purposes, this is a non-title IV entity.



## Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

*(See also Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines.)*

|                                              |                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Approval<br/>Senior Staff</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>No</b>                 |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>Yes</b>                            |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                                   | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

An agreement with an entity (or entities) not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs to deliver 25-50% of a program’s content recorded on the SACSCOC institution’s transcript as its own requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. A prospectus must include the program(s) involved, names and contact information of the principal responsible parties at the institution and participating entity (or entities), and a copy of a signed agreement with the entity (or entities). SACSCOC is obligated to respond within 90 days of receipt of the notification. Also refer to Standard 10.9 of the

*Principles of Accreditation.*

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION entering into a cooperative academic arrangement with a non-title IV certified entity offering up to 50% of a program requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation (see also Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification).



*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval](#). (p. 101).



**Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Notification**

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

*(See also Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines.)*

|                                 |                                              |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Notification</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>No</b>    |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>No</b>                |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                      | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

An agreement with an entity (or entities) not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs to deliver less than 25% of a program’s content recorded on the SACSCOC institution’s transcript as its own requires notification prior to implementation. SACSCOC is obligated to respond within 90 days of receipt of the notification. Also refer to Standard 10.9 of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION entering into a cooperative academic arrangement with a non-title IV certified entity requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation; notification is not an option (see also Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval).

*What to submit*

1. An affirmative statement that the institution will record credits under the arrangement (or other measures of completion) on its academic transcripts as awarded by the institution.
2. The name and credential of each program to which credits earned under the arrangement will apply.
3. The maximum percentage of the total program requirements that will be earned under the agreement; identify this for each program for which credits earned under the arrangement will apply.
4. Demonstrate the institution’s determination that the entity or entities in the agreement are non-title IV entities for the purpose of substantive change as provided in the *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines* section of this policy.
5. A statement of the institution’s intent for students enrolled in the program(s) covered under the agreement to be eligible to receive title IV federal financial aid including the portion of each program or programs that will be eligible.
  - a. If the intent is for students to receive title IV aid,
    - i. demonstrate the institution has assessed and reached a good-faith conclusion of the program(s) title IV eligibility under the terms of the agreement, and
    - ii. if any portion of any program or programs will not be eligible for title IV aid, demonstrate the institution’s plan to communicate this information to the affected students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.
  - b. If the intent is students will not receive title IV aid, demonstrate the institution’s plan to communicate this information to the affected

students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.

6. A copy of a signed and dated memorandum of agreement or other document explaining the scope and responsibilities of each partnering institution or entity.
7. The names and contact information of the principal parties at the institution and at each participating entity (or entities); this may be included in the memorandum of agreement.
8. Provisions for the regular review of the agreement, including renewal and termination of the agreement; this may be included in the memorandum of agreement.
9. The intended implementation date.



## Method of Delivery – Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

|                                  |                                              |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES                         |                                              |
| <b>Approval<br/>Senior Staff</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT                  |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                        |                                              |
| FEE                              |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                        |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Adding a method of instructional delivery requires approval prior to implementation if

1. an institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION  
—OR—

2. an institution with SACSCOC Prison Education Program (PEP) – Institutional-level Approval adds, for the first time, a method of delivery not previously used in its PEPs. For example, if an institution’s PEPs are delivered by face-to-face instruction only and the institution adds

distance education as a method of delivery for the first time in a PEP, then adding the distance education method of delivery requires approval prior to implementation. All other method of delivery approvals and notifications also apply without exception as applicable: Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval, Competency-based Education Direct Assessment–Approval, and Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval.

Institutions that are not on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION or are not adding its first method of delivery in a PEP are not required to secure approval to add a method of delivery. However, all institutions are subject to method of delivery notification (see Method of Delivery – Notification).

A specific method of delivery applies when 50% or more of a program is delivered by that method. A program may be delivered 50% or more by more than one method (students may have the option to choose from different methods of delivery for the same program, e.g., predominately face-to-face versus predominately distance education).

The three methods of delivery are

- competency-based education,
- distance education, and
- face-to-face instruction.



*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for Method of Delivery – Approval](#) (p. 102).



**Method of Delivery – Notification**

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

|                                 |                                              |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Notification</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>No</b>    |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>No</b>                |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                      | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Adding a method of instructional delivery to an existing program requires notification prior to implementation.

A specific method of delivery applies when 50% or more of a program is delivered by that method. A program may be delivered 50% or more by more than one method (students may have the option to choose from different methods of delivery for the same program, e.g., predominately face-to-face versus predominately distance education).

The three methods of delivery are

- competency-based education,
- distance education, and
- face-to-face instruction.

For example, adding a distance education delivery to an existing program delivered face-to-face requires notification.

Adding some methods of delivery may require approval as a separate type of substantive change:

- Adding a direct assessment competency-based education delivery of a program requires SACSCOC approval if 50% or more of the program can be earned by direct assessment
- Adding a course/credit-based competency-based education delivery of a program requires SACSCOC approval if 50% or more of the program can be earned by course/credit-based competency-based education *and* if the institution has not been previously approved to offer 50% or more of a program by course/credit-based competency-based education.
- Adding a distance education delivery of a program requires SACSCOC approval if 50% or more of the program can be earned by distance education *and* if the institution has not been previously approved to offer 50% or more of a program by distance education.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION adding a method of instructional delivery to an existing program requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation; notification is not an option (see also Method of Delivery–Approval).

*What to submit*

1. The name of the program (to indicate the discipline).

2. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Associate of Arts, Master of Accounting).
3. The instructional level (associate, baccalaureate, master's, education specialist, or doctoral, if not obvious from the credential).
4. The method of delivery to be added: competency-based education, distance education, or face-to-face instruction.
5. The intended implementation date.



## New Program – Approval

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

|                                              |                                              |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Approval<br/>Senior Staff</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>No</b>                 |                                              |
| FEE<br><b>Yes</b>                            |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                                   | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

A new program with 50-100% new content is a significant departure from the institution's existing programs and requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

For an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION, a new program with 25-100% new content is a significant departure from the institution's existing programs and requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

- Content is new if it is not currently offered by the institution at the new program's instructional level (associate, baccalaureate, master's, education specialist, or doctoral).
- A determination of the percentage of new content is made by the institution, not SACSCOC.
- New program approval equally applies to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
- If the institution is not currently approved to offer courses or programs at the new program's instructional level, a level change approval is required (e.g., the institution's first courses or programs at the baccalaureate degree level).
- Increasing the level of a program, i.e., offering a new program in a discipline at a higher instructional level than a currently offered program, is by definition a significant departure. For example, if an institution offers a baccalaureate degree program in a discipline and begins a new program in the same discipline at the master's degree level, then the new program is a significant departure and requires approval prior to implementation. This applies across all instructional levels.
- A proposed degree program that does not meet the program length requirement of Standard 9.2 of the *Principles of Accreditation* must be submitted as a New Program – Approval prospectus.



### *What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for New Program – Approval](#) (p. 103).



## Program Closure

Closing a program requires SACSCOC approval. All program closures require a teach-out plan, independent of the size of the program, number of currently enrolled students (including programs with no students enrolled), or other program characteristics.

|                                  |                                           |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES                         |                                           |
| <b>Approval</b>                  |                                           |
| <b>Exec Council of the Board</b> |                                           |
| COMMITTEE VISIT                  |                                           |
| <b>No</b>                        |                                           |
| FEE                              |                                           |
| <b>No</b>                        |                                           |
| <b>No</b>                        | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION |

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. Closure approval ensures the institution has a plan and process to provide students reasonable completion options that minimize disruption and additional costs. Because closure approval is approval of the teach-out process, not the closure per se (i.e., not after the fact), a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close.

Program closure includes ending a program at all locations or by all methods of delivery, but also includes ending a student’s completion option at a specific location or by a specific method of delivery. Therefore, program closure approval is required if a program closes

- at a location (on-campus or off-campus instructional site) but continues to be offered at other locations, or
- by a method of delivery but continues to be offered by other methods of delivery.

Program closure is not required for a specialization embedded *within* a discipline-specific program. Depending on an institution’s terminology, a specialization within a program may be called a minor, concentration, cognate, or other similar term.

Because time is of the essence – to provide students maximum time to consider and adapt to alternate completion plans – an institution may generally begin a program teach-out plan after it has been submitted to SACSCOC for approval. This assumes the institution completes a teach-out plan with all due care to address the requirements explained here and in the teach-out plan requirements in Appendix A. If upon review by SACSCOC the teach-out plan is incomplete or inadequate, the teach-out plan may be deferred pending additional information, explanation, or an acceptable revised teach-out plan is provided to SACSCOC. Although the institution may begin a teach-out immediately after submitting it, the closure is not approved until action is taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Starting and completing a teach-out plan before securing SACSCOC Board approval does not relieve the institution of its obligation to provide an acceptable teach-out plan.

The teach-out institution(s) – i.e., the institution(s) accepting displaced students from the closing program – may request an exception to Standard 9.4 (institutional credits for an undergraduate degree) and/or Standard 9.5 (institutional credits for a graduate or professional degree) to accommodate students near the end of their program of study.

Refer to the [Request for a Period of Noncompliance](#) policy for guidance. The institution closing its program should ensure the teach-out institution(s) are aware of this option and may wish to include it in any teach-out agreement(s) executed pursuant to the closure.

*What to submit*

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Program Closure](#) (p. 104).



## Program Length Change

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

|                                  |                                              |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES                         |                                              |
| <b>Approval<br/>Senior Staff</b> |                                              |
| COMMITTEE VISIT                  |                                              |
| <b>No</b>                        |                                              |
| FEE                              |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                       |                                              |
| <b>Yes</b>                       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

A change in program length – for either an increase or a decrease – requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation if

- program credit hours (or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies) increase or decrease by 25% or more — AND —
- students' expected time to completion increases or decreases by more than one term or its equivalent or comparable measure.

This requirement equally applies to degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credentials.

A proposed degree program that does not meet the program length requirement of Standard 9.2 of the *Principles of Accreditation* must be submitted as a New Program – Approval prospectus.

*SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION:* An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation if program credit hours (or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies) increase or decrease by 25% or more, regardless of whether the students' expected time to completion changes. That is, the second criterion above does not apply to institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION:

- A change in program length if program credit hours – or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies – increase or decrease by 25% or more (versus the same percentage plus the additional criterion of changing expected time to completion by more than one term or its equivalent for institutions not on restriction).

*Exception:* An institution may, at its discretion, seek Program Length Change approval even if none of the criteria defined herein *requiring* approval are met. This exception allows an institution to secure approval as may be required under 34 C.F.R. § 668.14(b)(26), effective July 1, 2024, or other federal regulations, that limit program length for certain gainful employment programs. The determination of the need for Program Length Change approval rests solely with the institution. All other requirements, including the prospectus content, apply to Program Length Change approvals under this exception.

*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for a Program Length Change](#) (p. 105).



---

*(End of Program Changes)*

## **Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes**

- [Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines](#) (p. 52)
  - [Off-campus Instructional Site Notification](#) (p. 54)
  - [Off-campus Instructional Site Approval](#) (including branch campus) (p. 55)
    - [Committee Visits](#) (p. 58)
  - [Off-campus Instructional Site Closure](#) (p. 59)
-

## Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines

### Definitions

- Off-campus instructional site: A location
  - geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus and
  - where instruction is delivered.
- Branch campus: A special form of off-campus instructional site
  - that is geographically apart from an institution's main campus,
  - where instruction is delivered, and
  - is independent of the main campus of an institution. An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it
    - is permanent;
    - offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential;
    - has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
    - has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
- Program: For the purpose of an off-campus instructional site, a for-credit credential for which an institution awards a degree, diploma, certificate, or other credential at any level of instruction.
- Percentage of program instruction: The percentage of the *total* instruction required to earn a credential measured in credit hours, clock hours, competencies, or other generally accepted measure of progress to completion.

### Guidelines

- Off-campus instructional site requirements apply without exception to dual enrollment sites.
- If instruction is delivered by distance education (synchronously or asynchronously) to a location geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus  
— AND —  
if a student is required to be at the location to receive instruction, then the location is an off-campus instructional site.
- A clinical training site at which no didactic instruction is delivered is *not* an off-campus instructional site.
- A location at which no instruction is delivered to students is *not* an off-campus instructional site, e.g., a distance education video studio (with no students physically present), an off-campus student services complex, or administrative offices.
- Site names must be unique for an institution; an institution cannot have multiple sites with identical names. Check the SACSCOC website or Institutional Portal to verify before submitting.



- Site addresses must be unique for an institution; an institution cannot have multiple sites with identical addresses. Check the SACSCOC website or Institutional Portal to verify before submitting.



## Off-campus Instructional Site Notification

(See also *Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines.*)

|                 |                                           |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Notification</b>                       |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                 |
| FEE             | <b>No</b>                                 |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION |

An off-campus instructional site at which 25-49% of a program’s instruction is delivered requires notification prior to implementation.

Instruction at a site may cross the 25% notification threshold any time after the institution submits notification; the institution does not have to wait for a SACSCOC response to implement (note this applies to site notification only, not to site approval).



*What to submit*

1. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution’s existing site).
2. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers).
3. The intended implementation date.



## **Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus)**

*(See also Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines.)*

An off-campus instructional site at which 50% or more of a program's instruction is delivered requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

An off-campus instructional site may qualify as a branch campus; refer to the federally defined branch campus criteria under *Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines*. Before submitting a prospectus for approval of branch campus, ensure – and demonstrate in the prospectus – *all* branch campus criteria are met. A site name may not include “branch” or “branch campus” unless approved as a branch campus as defined in policy.

There are two site approval pathways:

- approval by extensive review, and
- approval by limited review.

The pathway available to an institution depends on

- the number of sites previously approved by extensive review, and
- the status of an institution as explained below for each pathway.

### **Extensive Review**

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An extensive review has two components:

- an institutional-level review, and
- a site-specific review.

The purpose of the institutional-level review is to ensure institutional capacity and planning to offer courses away from its main campus and to ensure quality across locations. Institutional capacity and planning considers

- adequacy of faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support services at sites;
- sufficient fiscal and administrative capacity to add additional sites;
- clear academic control of sites;
- regular evaluation of all sites;
- financial stability of the institution;
- engagement in long-range planning for expansion;
- and other factors.

The site-specific review considers

- physical resources including specialized equipment or materials at a site,
- qualifications of faculty at the site,
- adequate financial resources and financial planning for the site,
- adequacy of library and learning/information resource available to students at the site, adequacy of student support services available to student at the site,
- and other factors.

There are two extensive review approval methods:

- **Approval method one** – Approval of an off-campus instructional site by extensive review method one is required if the institution, at the time a site prospectus is submitted to SACSCOC,
  - has less than two sites approved under the extensive review criteria and process,  
—OR—
  - has not successfully completed at least one reaffirmation of accreditation,  
—OR—
  - is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

|                                                  |                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES                                         |                                           |
| <b>Approval</b><br><b>Full Board of Trustees</b> |                                           |
| COMMITTEE VISIT                                  |                                           |
| <b>Contingent</b>                                |                                           |
| FEE                                              |                                           |
| <b>Yes</b>                                       |                                           |
| <b>Yes</b>                                       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees based on a prospectus review: The institution prepares and submits an off-campus instructional site by extensive review prospectus. The prospectus, in part, addresses the requirements listed above; refer to Appendix A of this document for guidance and requirements. An extensive review prospectus is reviewed by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees at a regularly scheduled biannual meeting, usually in June and December. Submission due dates are published in this policy and on the SACSCOC website.

An institution may submit a single prospectus for up to ten off-campus instructional sites provided program offerings are *identical* across all sites; otherwise, a separate prospectus (or prospectuses) is required for exceptions.

*What to submit*

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for Off-campus Instructional Site Approval by Extensive Review](#) (p. 106).

- **Approval method two** – Approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees based on inclusion and review at reaffirmation: An existing, approved site(s) that was (a) included as an approved site on the Institutional Summary Form submitted as part of the institution’s on-site reaffirmation review and (b) reviewed by the on-site reaffirmation committee to include the site- and institutional-level extensive review requirements, will be considered approved by extensive review after the SACSCOC Board of Trustees takes positive action on the institution’s reaffirmation. Approval method two applies to institutions reaffirmed in 2020 or afterwards.

REQUIRES  
**No action by the institution**

*Note:* If an institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION for a reason(s) related to an off-campus instructional site(s), approval(s) by method two may be postponed while the institution is on restriction.

Sites approved before the extensive review requirement was included in policy in 2020 are not deemed approved by extensive review except as provided by approval method two described above.



## Off-campus Instructional Site Committee Visits

(See also *Committee Visits, International Off-campus Instructional Sites*)

A substantive change committee visit is required if *any* of the following criteria is met at the time an off-campus instructional site is approved:

- the site is a branch campus;
- the institution has less than three already-approved off-campus instructional sites — i.e., the institution's first three approved sites each require a visit;
- the institution has not successfully completed at least one reaffirmation of accreditation;
- the institution is on sanction (Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause);
- any of the *International Off-campus Instructional Sites* conditions in the [Committee Visits](#) section of this policy is met; or
- the institution has not, in the professional judgment of SACSCOC staff, demonstrated effective oversight of off-campus instructional sites or if there is reason to believe the institution may not be able to meet all SACSCOC requirements at the new off-campus instructional site.

A visit is authorized by the Board of Trustees at the time of approval. The SACSCOC President is also authorized to appoint a substantive change committee.

If a committee is authorized to visit an additional location, the committee is required to determine compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, including verification of personnel, facilities, and resources as asserted by the institution in its application for the additional site.

*Exception.* An off-campus instructional site approved by the extensive review approval method two, as defined herein, is not subject to a substantive change committee visit; the site would have been subject to review as part of the institution's reaffirmation of accreditation.

Refer to the committee visits section of this policy for additional information, including additional considerations for visits to international off-campus instructional sites.



## Off-campus Instructional Site Closure

|                 |                                              |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES        | <b>Approval</b><br>Exec Council of the Board |
| COMMITTEE VISIT | <b>No</b>                                    |
| FEE             | <b>No</b>                                    |
| <b>No</b>       | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE<br>CHANGE RESTRICTION |

Closing an off-campus instructional site requires SACSCOC approval. Closure approval equally applies to

- notified sites and
- approved sites.

All off-campus instructional site closures require a teach-out plan, independent of the size of the site, location of the site, number of currently enrolled students (including sites with no students enrolled), or other site characteristics.

For SACSCOC, a site is considered closed as of the date the institution stops admitting students to the site; closure is *not* the date of last instruction.

Closure is defined this way because SACSCOC’s approval is of the teach-out process, not the closure per se, to help ensure students have reasonable opportunities to complete their program of study as originally planned at initial matriculation and with minimal disruption and additional costs. Because closure approval is for the teach-out process, not the closure per se (i.e., not after the fact), a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close. Institutional, system, or state definitions of closure must be reconciled by the institution with the SACSCOC definition.

If a program will no longer be offered at a site but the site will remain open for other programs, see program closure approval requirements under Program Closure.

A teach-out plan is due to SACSCOC as soon as possible after the institution decides to close a site.

Because time is of the essence – to provide students maximum time to consider and adapt to alternate completion plans – an institution may generally begin a site teach-out plan after it has been submitted to SACSCOC for approval. This assumes the institution completes a teach-out plan with all due care to address the requirements explained here and in the teach-out plan requirements in Appendix A. If upon review by SACSCOC the teach-out plan is incomplete or inadequate, the teach-out plan may be deferred pending additional information, explanation, or an acceptable revised teach-out plan is provided to SACSCOC. Although the institution may begin a teach-out immediately after submitting it, the closure is not approved until action is taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Starting and completing a teach-out plan before securing SACSCOC Board approval does not relieve the institution of its obligation to provide an acceptable teach-out plan.

The teach-out institution(s) – i.e., the institution(s) accepting displaced students from the closing off-campus instructional site – may request an exception to Standard 9.4 (institutional credits for an undergraduate degree) and/or Standard 9.5 (institutional credits for a graduate or professional degree) to accommodate students near the end of their

program of study. Refer to the [Request for a Period of Noncompliance](#) policy for guidance. The institution closing its off-campus instructional site should ensure the teach-out institution(s) are aware of this option and may wish to include it in any teach-out agreement(s) executed pursuant to the closure.

*What to submit*

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an Off-campus Instructional Site Closure](#) (p. 108).



---

*(End of Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes)*

## Other Changes

### Implementation Extension

(See also implementation dates and implementation time limits in the General Requirements section)

|                                                          |                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| REQUIRES<br><b>Approval</b><br>Exec Council of the Board |                                           |
| COMMITTEE VISIT<br><b>No</b>                             |                                           |
| FEE<br><b>No</b>                                         |                                           |
| <b>No</b>                                                | SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION |

An institution may request an implementation extension for cause for a previously approved substantive change. Except for substantive changes that must be implemented within 30 days as defined in policy, approved substantive change must be implemented within two years of approval (see also Implementation time limit in the General Requirements section of the substantive change policy). An implementation extension may be approved for a maximum of one year (i.e., 12 months) beyond the policy-defined two year implementation limit commencing with the date the SACSCOC Board of Trustees approval of the substantive change. If the substantive change is not implemented by the end of the approved extension but the institution still wants to implement, then the institution must re-submit a prospectus for approval prior to implementation.

- If a substantive change was not implemented by the intended implementation date as submitted in the prospectus but will be implemented within two years of the approval date, then an implementation extension is not necessary.
- Implementation extension is available for substantive changes requiring *approval* only; for substantive changes requiring *notification* only, reasonable extensions are the institution's prerogative.
- Only one implementation extension may be approved for a substantive change.
- An implementation extension request must be submitted within two years of the substantive change's approval date.
- Acquisition; governance change; merger / consolidation; and ownership, means of control, or legal status change are not eligible for implementation extension.



*What to submit*

Submit a substantive change request using the outline provided in [Appendix A for Implementation Extension](#) (p. 109).



---

(End of Other Changes)

## SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION is subject to different or additional requirements for certain types of substantive change. An institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION if it

- is currently on
  - Warning,
  - Probation, or
  - Probation for Good Cause;

—OR—

- was removed from Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause within the prior three years;

—OR—

- is currently on provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 668.13.\*

Alternately stated: An institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION while on sanction (Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause), for three years after removal from sanction, or while on provisional certification for federal financial aid programs.

Institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION are subject to the following different or additional substantive change requirements:

Off-campus instructional site changes —

- Approval through the extensive review pathway of all new off-campus instructional sites offering 50% or more of a program; i.e., the limited review pathway is not available  
(versus two sites approved through the extensive pathway then approval through the limited review pathway thereafter for institutions not on restriction).

---

\* If an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs *and* if the institution is directed to do so by the U.S. Department of Education, then the institution is required to submit an Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan for approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees as described in this policy. This requirement is in addition to the institution being on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

Program changes —

- Approval of new programs with 25% or more new content (versus 50% for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval of a change in program length if program credit hours – or an equivalent or comparable measure of progress such as clock hours or demonstrated competencies – increase or decrease by 25% or more (versus the same percentage plus the additional criterion of changing expected time to completion by one term or more for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval to add a method of delivery to an existing program (versus notification for institutions not on restriction),
- Approval of an agreement with an entity (or entities) not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education title IV programs to deliver less than 25% of a program's content (versus notification for institutions not on restriction).



## Committee Visits

A substantive change committee visit is a quality assurance mechanism designed to ensure the quality of an approved substantive change and to ensure the institution remains in compliance with all *Principles of Accreditation* and policies.

A committee visit is required for certain types of substantive change. A committee visit may also be required if certain institutional conditions are met. A committee visit is authorized at the time a substantive change is approved. The SACSCOC Board of Trustees and the SACSCOC President are authorized to appoint a substantive change committee to review an institution for any change requiring a more in-depth evaluation beyond the prospectus submitted by the institution. The Report of the Substantive Change Committee is reviewed by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees to determine ongoing accreditation status of an institution. A committee visit is generally within six months after *implementation* of the change.

A substantive change committee visit is required for the following seven types of substantive change. The criteria for a committee visit are detailed under the specific requirements by substantive change type in policy.

1. **Initiating an off-campus instructional site that requires SACSCOC approval.**

In addition to a committee visit at the time of approval if one or more visit criteria are met, visits to a representative sample of off-campus instructional sites are required at the fifth-year interval between reaffirmations if the additional sites have been initiated since the last reaffirmation and if the sites have not been visited. At any time, SACSCOC may choose to authorize a visit to a new site(s) developed between the fifth-year review and the next scheduled reaffirmation of accreditation. As part of reaffirmation, SACSCOC conducts a thorough review of a representative sample of approved off-campus instructional sites. The extent of the review at reaffirmation depends, in part, on whether there has been a recent review of the site(s).

If a committee is authorized to visit an additional location, the committee is required to determine compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, including verification of personnel, facilities, and resources as asserted by the institution in its application for the additional site.

The institution-specific criteria for a committee visit are listed in the in the Off-campus Instructional Site – Approval section of policy.

2. **Initiating a branch campus.**

The criteria to qualify an off-campus instructional site as a branch campus are listed in the Off-campus Instructional Site Approval section of the procedures.

Initiating a branch campus requires a committee visit regardless of the number of already-approved off-campus instructional sites.

3. **Initiating a change in governance or a change in ownership with a change in control.**

Refer to the *Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status* policy for additional information.

4. **Initiating a merger / consolidation or acquisition.**

Refer to the *Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status* policy for additional information.

5. **Initiating a level change.**

Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved requires level change approval and a substantive change committee visit. Depending on the existing related programs offered by an institution, a committee visit may not be required of institutions moving from Levels III (offers the master's degree as the highest degree) to IV (offers the master's and specialist degree as the highest degrees) or from Levels V (offers three or fewer doctoral degrees as the highest degrees) to VI (offering four or more doctoral degrees as the highest degrees). A level change adding authorization of a degree level lower than the highest degree level currently authorized for an institution may not require a visit if the new program(s) at the lower degree level do not constitute a significant departure from existing programs.

6. **Initiating a competency-based education by direct assessment program that requires SACSCOC approval.**

A committee visit is required for *each* competency-based education by direct assessment program that is approved.

7. **Initiating a Prison Education Program at an off-campus instructional site.**

A committee visit is required for the first two off-campus instructional sites approved under the Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval requirements. The committee visit requirement applies regardless of any prior approval or committee visit to the site.

## International Off-campus Instructional Sites

### First International Site

Any other requirement for a substantive change committee visit notwithstanding, approval of an institution's first international\* off-campus instructional site requires authorization of a substantive change committee visit.

### Subsequent International Sites

Approval of an institution's subsequent international\* off-campus instructional site may include authorization of a substantive change committee visit at the discretion of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Staff consider the following in making a committee visit recommendation to the Board:

- the institution's experience managing off-campus instructional sites, in general;
- the institution's experience managing international off-campus instructional sites, in particular, including sites in the proposed country or territory;
- known issues based on prior accreditation reviews suggesting institutional challenges to providing effective oversight of off-campus instructional sites; and
- the feasibility of visiting the site as part of a Fifth-year Interim Review or Reaffirmation within two years of approval of the site.

Authorization of a substantive change committee visit to an international site is made by the Board at the time an off-campus instructional site is approved. Any other off-campus instructional site committee requirement – e.g., approval of a site as a branch campus, approval of the institution's first three sites, etc. – supersedes an optional international site visit described herein.



---

\* Any site outside of the country of the institution's main campus; United States territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Island) may be considered outside of the United States for off-campus instructional site purposes.

## Fees and Expenses

### Review Fee

The following fees as assessed for review of a substantive change prospectus or application:

- Review of a substantive change prospectus or level change application.....**\$500**  
An institution may submit a single prospectus for up to ten off-campus instructional sites provided program offerings are *identical* across all sites; otherwise, a separate prospectus (or prospectuses) is required for exceptions.
- Fee per institution for a substantive change involving multiple institutions or entities (e.g., change of ownership, etc.) billed to the lead institution.....**\$500**
- Fee per institution for a substantive change involving multiple institutions or entities (merger/consolidation, acquisition) billed to the lead institution.....**\$5,000**
- Fee per non-SACSCOC institution or entity for a substantive change involving institutions or entities (e.g., a merger / consolidation, change of ownership, etc.) billed to the lead SACSCOC-accredited institution .....**\$7,500**

SACSCOC invoices review fees.

### Substantive Change Committee Visit Fee and Expenses

In addition to the review fee, the following fee and expenses will be assessed to an institution hosting a substantive change committee visit:

- Actual cost of the committee visit including travel, lodging, Incidental Fee for each reviewer, and related expenses.....**Actual cost and**
- Administrative fee.....**\$2,000**



## Unreported Substantive Change

(See also “Non-compliance” in the policy section of *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*)

If an institution discovers it is non-compliant with *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* or Standard 14.2 (substantive change) -- i.e., an unreported substantive change -- the top priority is to remedy the unreported change as soon as possible. This is accomplished by submitting, through the established substantive change submission process, either the notification or the prospectus for approval for the unreported substantive change.

Institutions are advised, when an unreported substantive change is discovered, to undertake a thorough institutional review to identify *all* possible unreported substantive changes. Once the population of unreported substantive changes is identified, each instance is separately addressed by submitting the appropriate notification or prospectus for approval. If multiple unreported substantive changes are identified, the institution should

- submit each instance at about the same time (i.e., within a few days of each other), and
- note, in each submission, that multiple instances of unreported substantive change have been identified and the institution is submitting each for review (e.g., “We have discovered three unreported substantive changes; this submission addresses the first,” and “We have discovered three unreported substantive changes; this submission addresses the second,” etc.) This will allow multiple instances to be included in the review of the institution’s substantive change policy and procedures, if warranted, as explained in this procedures section.

Upon review of the institution’s submission(s) of previously unreported substantive change, the institution may be asked to submit its institutional substantive change policy and procedures for review at a regularly scheduled SACSCOC Board of Trustees meeting. The purpose of the review is developmental to help the institution ensure it has adequate policy and procedures in place to identify and report substantive changes in a timely manner in keeping with SACSCOC requirements. Requests for the institution’s substantive change policy and procedures are included in the response letter from SACSCOC addressing the unreported substantive change; i.e., do not submit institutional substantive change policy and procedures proactively.

If the institution has not, since its last reaffirmation, been previously asked for its institutional substantive change policy and procedures for Board review, the institution submits its policy only. If the institution has, since its last reaffirmation, been previously asked for its institutional substantive change policy and procedures for Board review, the institution submits its policy and submits a narrative assessment of why the previously reviewed policy and procedures again failed to identify substantive changes requiring notification or approval prior to implementation.



## **Review Procedures**

### **Staff Options**

Upon receipt of a substantive change prospectus, a SACSCOC staff member will review the prospectus and any supporting material submitted by the institution and will:

1. recommend approval the substantive change, or
2. refer the substantive change to the SACSCOC Committee on Compliance and Reports ("C&R") for review and a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

### **Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review of the Prospectus or Application**

**Prospectus:** The Committee will review the prospectus and any additional material submitted, and will recommend one of the following actions:

1. Accept the prospectus or recommend approval of the change, with or without a site visit.
2. Defer action and seek additional information.
3. Recommend denial of approval of the substantive change and continue the institution's accreditation. The reason for denial of approval may have been caused by an institution's current non-compliance with a standard or requirement. Consequently, denial may be accompanied by monitoring or imposition of a sanction.

**Application:** An application for offering programs at a level different from that for which the institution is approved is automatically referred to the Committees on Compliance and Reports, except for a change in degree levels from III to IV and from V to VI which are reviewed by staff. The Committee will review the application and any additional material submitted, and will recommend one of the following actions:

1. Accept the application and approve the change, with a site visit within six months after initiation of the substantive change.
2. Defer action and seek additional information.
3. Deny approval of the substantive change and continue the institution's accreditation. The reason for denial of approval may have been caused by an institution's current non-compliance with a standard or requirement. Consequently, denial may be accompanied by monitoring or imposition of a sanction.

## Preparation for a Substantive Change Committee Visit

When a Substantive Change Committee is authorized, it is charged with determining the institution's continued compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* following the initiation of the change. The visit will occur within six months after initiation of the change. In preparation for this visit, the institution will complete the appropriate substantive change documentation template which cites relevant Standards and the roster of faculty members who will be teaching in the program or at the site. Both the template and the Faculty Roster form are available on the SACSCOC Web site ([www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)) under *Substantive Changes*. The institution's SACSCOC staff representative will inform the institution of the composition and schedule for the Committee.

## Options of the Committee on Compliance and Reports Following Review by a Substantive Change Committee

The report of the Substantive Change Committee, together with the response of the institution to the recommendations contained in that report (due within five months of the Committee visit), will be reviewed by the Committee on Compliance and Reports. The Committee on Compliance and Reports may recommend one of the following actions:

1. Continue the institution in accreditation, with or without a monitoring report.
2. Continue the institution in accreditation, impose a sanction, and request a monitoring report, with/without a special committee visit (mandatory visit if placed on Probation).
3. Discontinue accreditation.

## Teach-outs

A teach-out plan is a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides twenty-five percent or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC.

Following review and approval of a teach-out plan that includes a program that is accredited by another accrediting agency, SACSCOC will notify that accreditor of its approval.

## Teach-out Agreements

A teach-out agreement is a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides twenty-five percent or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.

For approval by SACSCOC, the agreement must

- be with an institution accredited by a
  - U.S. Department of Education recognized institutional accreditor, or
  - non-U.S. institutional accreditor or governmental entity;
- be consistent with applicable standards in the *Principles of Accreditation* and with SACSCOC policies; and
- provide for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring
  - the teach-out institution has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to that provided by the teach-out institution; and
  - the teach-out institution demonstrates it can provide students access to the program(s) and services without requiring them to move or travel substantial distances.

## Closing an Institution without an Agreement

If an institution accredited by SACSCOC closes and is no longer accredited, SACSCOC will seek assistance from the United States Department of Education and appropriate state agencies to help its students find reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional expense.

## **Applicant and Candidacy Teach-out Plans**

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. When an applicant is authorized a Candidacy Committee, it must submit an institutional contingency teach-out plan as a part of its Candidacy Report to the Candidacy Committee. The plan ensures students completing the teach-out would meet curricular requirements for professional licensure or certification, if any, and must include a list of academic programs offered by the institution and the names of other institutions that offer similar programs that could potentially enter into a teach out agreement with the institution. If the institution does not receive initial accreditation within two years of becoming a candidate, the institution will remain a candidate upon the condition that only the currently enrolled students have had a reasonable time to complete the activities in its teach-out plan to assist students in



transferring or completing their programs, but for no more than 120 days unless approved by SACSCOC Board of Trustees for Good Cause.



## **3. Appendices**

### **Appendix A: What to Submit for Approvals**

This appendix provides an enumerated list – an outline – of the required content for each prospectus and teach-out plan requiring approval prior to implementation. Required content is provided for each type of substantive change requiring approval identified in the Specific Requirements by Type of Change section of this document; the content of this appendix is arranged by the same categories – Institutional Changes, Program Changes, and Off-campus Instructional Site Changes – and in the same order.

Use the enumerated list as the verbatim outline of the prospectus or teach-out plan. Provide the information in the same order the information is listed in this appendix: substantive change readers know exactly what they need to see for a particular substantive change type and where it is expected to be in the prospectus. All listed content is required; do not leave any items unanswered even if the institutional response is “no” or “does not apply” – in those circumstances, provide an explanation.

Prospectuses are limited to 25 pages exclusive of appendices. Make judicious use of appendices by including only information necessary to support the institution’s proposed change: volume is not a valid substitute for substance. Moving content to an appendix is acceptable to meet the 25-page limit; Faculty Rosters, for example, may be moved to an appendix as necessary at the institution’s discretion. Respect substantive change reviewers’ time and professional judgment by providing direct, relevant, and complete information.

Prospectuses must be self-contained. The prospectus may not include materials by reference by linking to an external website. All information proffered by the institution in support of the proposed change must be on file.

Before beginning the prospectus, ensure the guidance and requirements provided in the General Requirements section and in the Procedures section of this document have been thoroughly reviewed and are understood.

## Common Content

Many substantive change prospectuses contain the same standard or common content. Rather than listing that content for every substantive change type, the common content is identified here. In the enumerated list of required content by substantive change type, common content is identified and can be copied-and-pasted from this section into the outline for the prospectus.

### Common Content A – Background and Context

1. A list of programs offered by the institution (excerpt from the catalog or a printout of a webpage is acceptable).
2. Abstract (one page maximum)
  - a. Briefly describe the proposed change to include the intended implementation date.
  - b. Provide projected number of students, if applicable.
  - c. Indicate the projected life of the change, as applicable: one-time/limited duration or ongoing).
  - d. Describe the primary target audience or market.
  - e. Describe the strengths of the institution to undertake the change.
3. Describe how the need for the change was determined and how the change was approved by the institution.
4. Describe how the change is consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.
5. Provide documentation of faculty involvement in the planning and approval of the change.
6. Provide evidence of legal authority for the change if approval is required by the governing board or the state.

*Note for reviews subject to approval by the Executive Council or by senior staff:* If the change is pending approval by the institution's governing board or by a state board or authority, note the expected approval date. The institution will be contacted at the time of review for evidence of approvals that were pending at the time of submission; do not send approval documentation until requested.

*Note for reviews subject to approval by the full Board of Trustees:* Evidence of all required approvals must be included with the original submission; there is no option to submit additional information.



**Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications**

1. Provide a completed Faculty Roster Form to include faculty members scheduled to teach in the proposed substantive change (program, site, arrangement, etc.). Follow the Faculty Roster Form Instructions which require the institution to demonstrate the qualifications of each faculty member to teach the courses assigned (refer to Standard 6.2a (faculty qualifications) of the *Principles of Accreditation*). Use the standard Faculty Roster Form and instructions; do not create a new form or format:
  - a. Faculty Roster Form [[DOCX](#)]
  - b. Faculty Roster Form Instruction [[PDF](#)]
2. Include on the Faculty Roster Form all faculty members for the courses *to be taught*; do not include historical teaching assignments unless they are also to be taught in the proposed change.
  - a. For a program: list the faculty members for all courses in the curriculum; exclude general education courses, if applicable, unless the general education curriculum is the substantive change being submitted for review.
  - b. For an off-campus instructional site: list the faculty members for all courses to be taught at the site for the first 12 months of operation.
3. Do not submit faculty curricula vitae or transcripts.
4. Referring to Standard 6.2a (faculty qualifications):
  - a. For a program: demonstrate the institution has at least one faculty member qualified in the discipline to develop the curriculum and/or teach in the program.
  - b. For a site: demonstrate the institution has at least one faculty member qualified in the discipline to teach at the site.
5. Provide narrative with supporting evidence to demonstrate the number of full-time faculty members will be adequate to support the proposed change. In addition to at least one faculty member qualified in the discipline, include any to-be-hired faculty members, if applicable, on the Faculty Roster Form (e.g., “To-be-hired #1,” “To-be-hired #2,” etc.) with the expected qualifications for teaching the courses assigned. Describe the impact on faculty workload of the proposed change.
6. For a graduate program,
  - a. demonstrate scholarship and research capability of faculty members teaching in the program and
  - b. if applicable, document faculty experience in directing student research or creative work (always applicable for doctoral programs).



## **Common Content C – Resources**

### Library and Learning/Information Resources

1. List and describe discipline-specific learning resources to support a new program. Do not list all library resources; include only those related to the proposed change. If electronic databases are listed, describe the discipline-specific suites of resources rather than the name only of the database or the consortium through which it is accessed (Such as Galileo, Louis, TexShare, Viva, etc.).
2. Document discipline-specific refereed journals and primary source materials. This is particularly important for graduate programs and especially important for doctoral programs.
3. Describe how students enrolled in a new program, at an off-campus instructional site, or in a distance education program can access discipline-specific library and learning/information resources.
4. Describe how students are made aware of library and learning/information resources available to them, how they can learn how to access the resources and are instructed in the use of online resources, as well as on-site library resources.
5. Describe resources to support students in access to and use of library and learning/information resources.

### Student Support Services

1. Describe specific programs, services, and activities which will support students enrolled in the new program and / or enrolled at a new off-campus site /additional location and / or enrolled in distance education programs. Do not list student support services which are not relevant to the specific change.

### Physical Resources

1. Describe the adequacy of physical facilities which will support the change.
2. Describe equipment which will be available for a new program or available at a new site.
3. Describe the impact that the proposed change will have on physical facilities and equipment for existing programs and services.

### Financial Resources

1. Describe in narrative the financial resources needed to initiate and provide on-going support of the proposed change.
2. Provide a budget for the first year of the proposed change. For a branch campus, provide a three-year budget. Do not provide an institutional budget.



3. Include in the budget resources to be directed to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services for the proposed change.
4. Include projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow for the proposed change.
5. Include a contingency plan should expected revenue does not materialize or should costs exceed estimates.



**Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes**

1. Provide a brief description of institutional assessment processes.
2. Describe how the institution will incorporate the proposed change into the institution-wide assessment infrastructure and processes.



## Institutional Changes

### Change in Measure of Student Progress to Completion

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Describe the current measure and the proposed measure of student progress to completion.
2. Describe the rationale for the change.
3. Provide a narrative explanation or a chart illustrating the conversion equivalency between the current method and the proposed method.
4. Demonstrate the proposed method will, for all programs, maintain compliance with the Standard 9.2 (program length) of the *Principles of Accreditation*. Provide equivalencies to semester credit hours, if applicable.
5. Provide evidence the proposed measure is published and accessible to all concerned parties (students, faculty, staff) in compliance with the Standard 9.7 (program requirements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
6. Provide evidence the proposed measure is published in institutional policy and accurately reflects how the policy and procedures will be implemented in compliance with Standard 10.1 (academic policies) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
7. Describe how the institution will determine the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses under the proposed measure regardless of the method of delivery.
8. Describe how the institution will provide oversight of the policy in compliance with the SACSCOC *Credit Hours* policy and with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.



## Competency-based Education by Course/Credit-based Approach – Institutional-level Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide [Common Content A](#) – Background and Context (p. 75), relative to the proposed change.
2. Provide a description of the program or programs that will be taught via credit/course-based competency-based education methodology for the first time.
3. Describe the infrastructure to support credit/course-based competency-based education.
4. Describe how faculty members will be trained in credit/course-based competency-based education and how courses will be developed.
5. Describe technical support for students enrolled in courses delivered by credit/course-based competency-based education and technical support for faculty members.
6. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications (p. 76), relative to the proposed change.
7. Provide [Common Content C](#) – Resources (p. 77), relative to the proposed change.
8. Describe how effectiveness of programs offered via credit/course-based competency-based education will be assessed.
9. Provide [Common Content D](#) – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes (p. 79), relative to the proposed change.



## Distance Education – Institutional-level Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide [Common Content A](#) – Background and Context (p. 75), relative to the proposed change.
2. Provide a description of the first program that will be taught 50% or more via distance education.
3. Describe the infrastructure to support distance delivery methods to include the learning management system and the administrative structure the support distance education.
4. Describe how faculty members will be trained in distance delivery methodology and how courses will be developed.
5. Describe technical support for students enrolled in courses delivered by distance methods and technical support for faculty members.
6. Document compliance with Standard 10.6 (distance and correspondence education) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
7. Document the institution’s approval in any state where distance education students may be located.
8. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications (p. 76), relative to the proposed change.
9. Provide [Common Content C](#) – Resources (p. 77), relative to the proposed change.
10. Describe how effectiveness of programs offered via distance delivery will be assessed.
11. Provide [Common Content D](#) – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes (p. 79), relative to the proposed change.



## Institution Closure

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. Communication
  - a. Describe a communication plan to inform students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of the institution's closure. The plan
    - i. must not rely on a single medium (e.g., email only),
    - ii. must be appropriate to each stakeholder,
    - iii. must include how it will inform students how to access transcripts, other academic records (such as advising plans), financial records (such as payments due to the institution), and financial aid records (such as loan processors),
    - iv. must explain how it will inform students of any additional costs associated with teach-out options, and
    - v. must provide copies of all planned communication from the institution to demonstrate the institution is making accurate statements about students' ability to transfer credits to teach-out institutions.
2. Student academic records
  - a. Describe a plan to preserve and make available to former students all academic transcripts including validations/confirmations of academic credentials awarded to former students.
  - b. Identify the party to whom academic records will be entrusted and include a physical address and contact information.
  - c. Identify any state or other governmental agency requirement regarding disposition of academic records.
  - d. Describe a plan to inform current and former students how they may request transcript copies.
  - e. Include a description of any encumbrances placed on access to academic records such as withholding transcript copies if a former student has an outstanding balance owed *to the institution*, consistent with current federal regulations.
3. Student accounts receivable
  - a. Describe a plan to collect outstanding balances owed *to the institution* by students and former students after the closure.
  - b. Include a description of how students and former students will be informed of the institution's intention to collect.
4. Refunds and loan discharges
  - a. Describe a plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on State refund policies.
5. Re-employment
  - a. Explain how the institution will assist faculty and staff in finding new employment.

6. Programs (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
  - a. Provide a list of all academic programs offered by the institution for all credentials (e.g., certificates, diplomas, degrees) and for all instructional levels (associate, baccalaureate, master's, education specialist, or doctoral, as applicable to the institution).
  - b. The program list must include for *each* program
    - i. at least two teach-out institutions offering comparable programs where students could complete their program of study, and
    - ii. for each program / teach-out institution combination,
      1. a statement of assurance that the method of delivery is comparable,
      2. a good faith assessment of the number and types of credits each teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to students' enrollment,
      3. a statement of assurance that the curricular requirements at the teach-out institution meet requirements for professional licensure or certification as applicable to the program,
      4. a statement of assurance that students are not required to move or travel substantial distances or durations with possible exceptions for highly specialized programs, and
      5. the institution's plan to provide a clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.
7. Teach-out institutions (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
  - a. Provide a list of all institutions identified as offering comparable programs where students could complete their programs of study to include
    - i. the name and web address of each institution,
    - ii. the institution's accreditor or accreditor(s),
    - iii. a good faith statement of assurance that the institution is in good standing with its institutional accreditor(s), the U.S. Department of Education, and is not under investigation, subject to an action, or being prosecuted for an issue related to academic quality, misrepresentation, fraud, or other severe matters by a law enforcement agency.
8. Students (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
  - a. Provide a list of all enrolled students by academic program to include each student's current progress to completion. Student names or other individually identifiable information may be anonymized at the institution's discretion using an identification number or code if the institution can deanonymize (i.e., reidentify) the individual student data if needed.
9. Spreadsheet templates
  - a. Information for items 6 (Programs), 7 (Teach-out institutions), and 8 (Students) above must be reported on SACSCOC-provided spreadsheet templates. The templates may be accessed from the substantive change webpage under

"Documents and Templates." Instruction and guidance are provided within the templates.

10. Teach-out agreements

- a. A teach-out agreement is usually required if any significant consideration *other than* the transfer of academic credit is agreed upon between the institution and a teach-out institution. If the teach-out institution is only transferring credit and making no additional consideration for students covered under a teach-out plan, then the institutions are, in essence, executing a transfer articulation agreement and a teach-out agreement is not necessary. Teach-out agreements are subject to approval separate from the approval of the teach-out plan.



## Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. Communication
  - a. Describe a communication plan to inform students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of the institution's closure. The plan
    - i. must not rely on a single medium (e.g., email only),
    - ii. must be appropriate to each stakeholder,
    - iii. must include how it will inform students how to access transcripts, other academic records (such as advising plans), financial records (such as payments due to the institution), and financial aid records (such as loan processors),
    - iv. must explain how it will inform students of any additional costs associated with teach-out options, and
    - v. must provide copies of all planned communication from the institution to demonstrate the institution is making accurate statements about students' ability to transfer credits to teach-out institutions.
2. Student academic records
  - a. Describe a plan to preserve and make available to former students all academic transcripts including validations/confirmations of academic credentials awarded to former students.
  - b. Identify the party to whom academic records will be entrusted and include a physical address and contact information.
  - c. Identify any state or other governmental agency requirement regarding disposition of academic records.
  - d. Describe a plan to inform current and former students how they may request transcript copies.
  - e. Include a description of any encumbrances placed on access to academic records such as withholding transcript copies if a former student has an outstanding balance owed *to the institution*, consistent with current federal regulations.
3. Student accounts receivable
  - a. Describe a plan to collect outstanding balances owed *to the institution* by students and former students after the closure.
  - b. Include a description of how students and former students will be informed of the institution's intention to collect.
4. Refunds and loan discharges
  - a. Describe a plan to provide all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge and, if applicable, information on State refund policies.
5. Re-employment
  - a. Explain how the institution will assist faculty and staff in finding new employment.

6. Programs (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
  - a. Provide a list of all academic programs offered by the institution for all credentials (e.g., certificates, diplomas, degrees) and for all instructional levels (associate, baccalaureate, master's, education specialist, or doctoral, as applicable to the institution).
  - b. The program list must include for *each* program
    - i. at least two teach-out institutions offering comparable programs where students could complete their program of study, and
    - ii. for each program / teach-out institution combination,
      1. a statement of assurance that the method of delivery is comparable,
      2. a good faith assessment of the number and types of credits each teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to students' enrollment,
      3. a statement of assurance that the curricular requirements at the teach-out institution meet requirements for professional licensure or certification as applicable to the program,
      4. a statement of assurance that students are not required to move or travel substantial distances or durations with possible exceptions for highly specialized programs, and
      5. the institution's plan to provide a clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.
7. Teach-out institutions (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
  - a. Provide a list of all institutions identified as offering comparable programs where students could complete their programs of study to include
    - i. the name and web address of each institution,
    - ii. the institution's accreditor or accreditator(s),
    - iii. a good faith statement of assurance that the institution is in good standing with its institutional accreditator(s), the U.S. Department of Education, and is not under investigation, subject to an action, or being prosecuted for an issue related to academic quality, misrepresentation, fraud, or other severe matters by a law enforcement agency.
8. Students (report on spreadsheet template; see below)
  - a. Provide a list of all enrolled students by academic program to include each student's current progress to completion. Student names or other individually identifiable information may be anonymized at the institution's discretion using an identification number or code if the institution can deanonymize (i.e., reidentify) the individual student data if needed.
9. Spreadsheet templates
  - a. Information for items 6 (Programs), 7 (Teach-out institutions), and 8 (Students) above must be reported on SACSCOC-provided spreadsheet [templates](#). The templates may also be accessed from the substantive change [webpage](#) under

“Documents and Templates.” Instruction and guidance are provided within the templates.

10. Teach-out agreements (optional at the institution’s discretion)

- a. A teach-out agreement is usually required if any significant consideration *other than* the transfer of academic credit is agreed upon between the institution and a teach-out institution. If the teach-out institution is only transferring credit and making no additional consideration for students covered under a teach-out plan, then the institutions are, in essence, executing a transfer articulation agreement and a teach-out agreement is not necessary. Teach-out agreements are subject to approval separate from the approval of the teach-out plan.



## **Mission Change**

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide the current mission statement.
2. Provide the proposed mission statement.
3. Provide the intended implementation or effective date of the change.
4. Provide evidence of the institution's governing board approval of the mission change
5. Describe the impetus and rationale for the mission change.
6. Assess the impact on the number and mix of programs in the institution's portfolio.
7. Assess the impact on the number and composition of the institution's faculty in the short- and long-term.
8. Assess the impact on staff members.
9. Describe the impact on the non-academic operations of the institutions, e.g., business services, facilities and maintenance, intercollegiate athletics, etc.
10. Describe the current financial stability of the institution.
11. Assess the financial impact of the mission change.
12. Describe any expected, forthcoming substantive change because of (not concurrent with) the mission change, e.g., new program prospectuses, off-campus instructional site prospectuses, level change application, etc.



## Level Authorization Addition

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide the intended implementation date.
2. Provide the level authorization for which the institution is seeking approval; i.e., what instruction and credential level is the institution seeking to add authorization to offer: I (associate), II (baccalaureate), III (masters), or IV (specialist). Indicate one only.
3. Provide the program or programs to be offered in the first year of implementation at the new authorization level. For each program, provide the credential (e.g., Associate of Arts, Master of Education, etc.) *and* the discipline (e.g., Mechatronics, Early Childhood Education, etc.).
4. Provide [Common Content A](#) – Background and Context (p. 75), relative to the proposed change.
5. Describe the institution's
  - a. assessment of the level authorization's impact on the institution's capacity to support the level's program(s) instruction, students and student support services, library/learning and information resources, faculty, and other affected institutional capacities, and
  - b. how the institution will manage the impact of the level authorization while maintain compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* and SACSCOC policies.
6. Separately, for *each* program identified in the item above:
  - a. Provide the curriculum for the entire program.
  - b. Provide program-specific goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program.
  - c. Describe how the student learning outcomes for the program will be assessed.
  - d. Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program. Do not provide syllabi or catalogs (though course description *excerpts* from a catalog are acceptable).
  - e. Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program.
  - f. Provide the planned method(s) of delivery, as defined in policy, of the program.
  - g. Provide the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered, i.e., on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s). (Providing this information does not replace submitting a notification or prospectus for approval, if necessary, of an off-campus instructional site as required by policy.)
  - h. Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
  - i. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program.
  - j. For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in the traditional formats have been achieved.
  - k. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications (p. 76), relative to the proposed change.
  - l. Provide [Common Content C](#) – Resources (p. 77), relative to the proposed change.



- m. Provide [Common Content D](#) – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes (p. 79), relative to the proposed change.



## Level Change to a Higher Level

*Note:* Some items in the level change to a higher level prospectus are associated with one or more of the *Principles of Accreditation*. These items are noted by including the standard number and description and followed by "[CR]" if the standard is a core requirement. The institution's responses to these items are evaluated, in part, relative to the expectation of compliance with the standard when the level change is implemented.

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide a current, completed [\*Institutional Summary Form Prepared for SACSCOC Reviews\*](#).
2. Program information
  - a. Provide the program or programs to be offered at the higher level. For each program, provide the credential and the discipline; e.g., Bachelor of Science in Physics, Master of Fine Arts in Digital Arts, Doctor of Philosophy in Genomics, etc. Avoid using abbreviations only. *Note:* Only programs or coursework submitted for review at the new level will be included in the Board of Trustees' action.
  - b. Provide the locations where the program will be offered. If the proposed programs/courses will be offered at off-campus instructional sites, list each site and address as currently on record at SACSCOC, the mode of delivery, and the percentage of the program that will be offered at each site. *Note:* Sites offering 25% or more of a program should be on record at SACSCOC at the time of the level change application submission. If more than 50% of a program will be offered at a site, the site must be approved separate from the level change. Including an instructional site in the level change prospectus -- whether for a site subject to notification (offering 25-49% of a program) or for a site subject to approval (offering 50% or more of a program -- does not relieve an institution of its obligation to submit notification or secure approval for a site as warranted. Sites offering less than 25% of the program should be reported for this item but there is no separate off-campus instructional site notification or approval obligation.
3. General institutional and program information
  - a. Provide the name of the agency or entity that has legally authorized the institution to provide instruction and credentials at the new level.
  - b. Document the charter, letter of authorization, or letter of approval from the appropriate agency or organization indicating the institution may offer instruction and credentials at the new level. Board minutes indicating approval are acceptable documentation; board minutes that do not indicate approval and board agendas are not acceptable documentation. All required documentation must be included with the prospectus at the time of submission; supplemental or piecemeal submission of documentation is not possible.

- c. Provide the date the institution intends to enroll the first students at the higher level.
  - d. Provide the projected date the first students will graduate from a program at the higher level.
4. Enrollment information
- a. Referring to your most recently completed SACSCOC Institutional Profile, provide the following enrollments (headcounts) for the institution for the most recent fall term:
    - i. The year for which this fall term data is reported
    - ii. Full-time undergraduate students
    - iii. Full-time post-baccalaureate students
    - iv. For-credit part-time undergraduate students
    - v. For-credit part-time post-baccalaureate students
    - vi. Non-credit course enrollment students
    - vii. Total headcount (sum of the five preceding items)
  - b. Provide the following projected enrollments (headcounts) for the new program(s) at the proposed higher level:
    - i. Full-time students
    - ii. Part-time students
    - iii. Non-credit students
    - iv. Total projected headcount (sum of the three preceding items)
5. Describe the rationale for the new program(s) including an assessment of need.
6. Financial resources
- a. Provide a budget for the new program(s) to include revenues and expenses for the first three years of operation. (Standard 13.1: Financial resources [CR] and Standard 13.3: Financial responsibility)
  - b. Provide a copy of the full financial statement audit from the most recent audited fiscal year. (Standard 13.2: Financial documents [CR])
7. In response to the following selected standards, explain how the institution will maintain compliance relative to the proposed level change and new program(s) at the new level:
- a. Standard 2.1: Institutional mission [CR]. The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. As part of the response, clarify that the mission statement is inclusive of the expansion to a new program(s) at a higher level.
  - b. Standard 5.4: Qualified administrative/academic officers. The institution employs and regularly evaluates administrative and academic officers with appropriate experience and qualifications to lead the institution.
  - c. Standard 6.2.a: Faculty qualifications. For each of its educational programs, the institution justifies and documents the qualifications of its faculty members.
    - i. Provide faculty qualifications on the Faculty Roster Form [\[DOCX\]](#). Use the standard Faculty Roster Form and instructions [\[PDF\]](#); do not create a

- new form or format. Limit entries to those faculty members assigned to the new program(s).
- ii. For graduate programs, provide documentation of the scholarship and research capabilities of faculty.
  - iii. For doctoral programs, provide documentation of faculty experience in directing dissertation research.
- d. Standard 6.2.b: Program faculty. For each of its educational programs, the institution employs a sufficient number of full-time faculty members to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review.
- i. The narrative should only address the impact of the program expansion (new programs and affected existing programs – e.g., include information on the impact of staffing at the lower degree level(s) in related fields of study).
  - ii. Describe the impact of the program expansion on faculty workload.
  - iii. Provide a list of newly hired faculty to support this initiative.
- e. Standard 6.2.c: Program coordination. For each of its educational programs, the institution assigns appropriate responsibility for program coordination. The narrative should only address the new program(s).
- f. Standard 8.2.a: Student outcomes: educational programs. The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.
- i. Explain how the institution is monitoring the quality of the new program(s).
  - ii. Summarize current procedures for the assessment of learning outcomes and achievement, and how results are being or will be used to improve the new programs.
  - iii. Include relevant information about existing related programs that may serve as indicators of the institutional effectiveness process that apply to the new program(s).
- g. Standard 9.1: Program content [CR]. Educational programs (a) embody a coherent course of study, (b) are compatible with the stated mission and goals of the institution, and (c) are based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. The narrative should only address the new program(s).
- h. Standard 9.2: Program length [CR]. The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. The institution provides an explanation of equivalencies when using units other than semester credit hours. The institution provides an appropriate justification for all degree programs and combined degree programs that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. The narrative should only address the new program(s).

- i. Standard 9.4: Institutional credits for an undergraduate degree. At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for an undergraduate degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree.  
Address Standard 9.4 only if the institution is moving from Level I to Level II.
- j. Standard 9.5: Institutional credits for a graduate/professional degree. At least one-third of the credit hours required for a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. Address Standard 9.5 only if the level change involves programs at the graduate-level.
- k. Standard 9.6: Post-baccalaureate rigor and curriculum. Post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and graduate degree programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs, and are structured (a) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (b) to ensure engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training. Address Standard 9.6 only if the level change includes graduate programs
- l. Standard 9.7: Program requirements. The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate, graduate, and post-baccalaureate professional programs, as applicable. The requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. The narrative should only address the new program(s).
- m. Standard 10.4: Academic governance. The institution (a) publishes and implements policies on the authority of faculty in academic and governance matters, (b) demonstrates that educational programs for which academic credit is awarded are approved consistent with institutional policy, and (c) places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. The narrative should only address the new program(s).
- n. Standard 10.5: Admissions policies and practices. The institution: (a) publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission; (b) ensures that its recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices, policies, and accreditation status; and (c) ensures that independent contractors or agents used for recruiting purposes and for admission activities are governed by the same principles and policies as institutional employees. The narrative should only address the new program(s).
- o. Standard 10.7: Policies for awarding credit. The institution publishes and implements policies for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. These policies require oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments. In educational programs not based on credit hours (e.g., direct assessment programs), the institution has a sound means for determining credit equivalencies.
- p. Standard 10.8: Evaluating and awarding external academic credit. The institution publishes policies for evaluating, awarding and accepting credit not originating from the institution. The institution ensures (a) the academic quality of any credit or coursework recorded on its transcript, (b) an approval process with oversight by

persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments, and (c) the credit awarded is comparable to a designated credit experience and is consistent with the institution's mission. Emphasize aspects of this standard that may have special relevance to the program expansion at the new degree level.

- q. Standard 11.1: Library and learning/information resources [CR]. The institution provides adequate and appropriate library and learning/information resources, services, and support for its mission. The narrative should only address the new program(s).
- r. Standard 11.3: Library and learning/information access. The institution provides (a) student and faculty access and user privileges to its library services and (b) access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources.
- s. Standard 12.1: Student support services [CR]. The institution provides appropriate academic and student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission. The narrative should address the appropriateness of student support services available to students at the new degree level.
- t. Standard 12.4: Student complaints. The institution (a) publishes appropriate and clear procedures for addressing written student complaints, (b) demonstrates that it follows the procedures when resolving them, and (c) maintains a record of student complaints that can be accessed upon request by SACSCOC.
- u. Standard 13.7: Physical resources. The institution ensures adequate physical facilities and resources, both on and off campus, that appropriately serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities. The narrative should emphasize facilities relevant to the new program(s).



## Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. [Common Content A](#) – Background and Context (p. 75), as defined in the substantive change policy, relative to the proposed prison education program.
2. A copy of a signed final written agreement between the institution and the oversight entity (or entities) responsible for the facilities where confined or incarcerated students are located addressing all requirements stipulated in Part 668.236 of the federal regulations, including,
  - a. the oversight entity’s approval of the institution to operate in its facilities;
  - b. the oversight entity’s approval of the programs to be offered in its facilities with programs identified by name to include, for each, credential (e.g., Associate of Arts, certificate, diploma, etc.) and discipline (e.g., Dental Hygiene, Medical Office Management, Web Development, etc.);
  - c. how the oversight entity will determine, after the initial two-year approval, that the programs operating in its facilities are in the best interest of students;
  - d. assurance of transferability of credits to at least one other institution for each program identified above;
  - e. programs to be offered satisfy professional licensure or certification requirement, if applicable;
  - f. programs to be offered do not prohibit licensure or employment of graduates who were formerly incarcerated, if applicable; and
  - g. acknowledgement that PEP programs and sites must be taught-out and closed by the institution if the institution is subject to adverse action by SACSCOC.
3. Evidence of an effective methodology developed and implemented by the institution to establish the prison education program, in collaboration with the oversight entity (or entities), meets the same standards as substantially similar programs delivered to non-prison education program students. The methodology *may* include PEP versus non-PEP similarity evaluations of
  - a. academic advising;
  - b. academic policies such as grade appeals, conditions for continued enrollment, program completion time limits, student codes of conduct, etc.;
  - c. access to appropriate library / learning and information resources;
  - d. access to learning and student support services;
  - e. admission requirements;
  - f. career services;
  - g. curricula;
  - h. faculty qualifications;
  - i. student learning outcomes; and
  - j. other measures or evidence at the institution’s and the oversight entity’s discretion.



## Program Changes

### Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

#### 1. Program Information

- a. Provide [Common Content A](#) – Background and Context (p. 75), relative to the proposed change.
- b. Explain how the program meets the policy-defined characteristics of a competency-based education program by direct assessment versus a competency-based education program by course/credit-based approach.
- c. Provide the curriculum for the program, including a description of each competency. The curriculum must include
  - i. all competencies required to be demonstrated to complete the program,
  - ii. a description of each competency,
  - iii. the sequence through which competencies will be completed.
- d. Provide the program's student learning outcomes if different from the program's competencies. For example, student learning outcomes may be individual competencies and/or clusters of related competencies.
- e. Demonstrate how the curriculum
  - i. creates a coherent program of study in the discipline, and
  - ii. represents teaching and learning at the program's intended instructional level, i.e., teaching at learning at the associate, baccalaureate, master's, specialist, or doctoral level.
- f. Explain how the program's competencies are related to or derived from external standards, i.e., industry or licensure standards. If competencies are not related to or derived from external standards, explain the method or process by which the program's competencies were identified and defined.
- g. Identify the method(s) of delivery by which the program's instruction will be delivered (face-to-face, distance education, etc.).
- h. Explain how students will engage in regular and substantive interaction with the faculty.
- i. Provide the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered, i.e., on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s). (Providing this information does not replace submitting a notification or prospectus for approval, if necessary, of an off-campus instructional site as required by policy.)

#### 2. Institutional Support and Practices

- a. Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program.
- b. Document that recruitment materials are clear and comprehensive; include the structure and expectations of the program, tuition and fees, and academic policies, etc.
- c. If the institution engages a contractor to provide services for a direct assessment program, provide the complete, fully executed agreement with contact information

for both parties. (See Cooperative Academic Agreements in the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policies and Procedures*.)

- d. Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*. Include the methodology used to determine the credit hour equivalence of the direct assessment measures.
  - e. Explain
    - i. how many attempts a student is given to demonstrate mastery of a competency, and
    - ii. what happens if a student fails to achieve mastery of a competency (e.g., options for academic support, remedial instruction, etc.).
  - f. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program. Include qualifications of person(s) directly responsible for administrative oversight on the Faculty Roster.
  - g. Describe how tuition and fees are determined based on the institution's contribution to the development or formation of the student's knowledge and skills.
  - h. Describe and explain special arrangements for the direct assessment program (in contrast to non-direct assessment programs) for
    - i. course grades or grade equivalents;
    - ii. institutional policies on satisfactory academic standing, i.e., academic warnings or probations;
    - iii. recording competencies on academic transcripts;
    - iv. transfer policies, e.g., accepting previously completed traditional course credit hours as satisfying a direct assessment program's defined competency or competencies, prohibiting credit transfer, etc.; and
    - v. withdrawal and refund policies.
  - i. Provide a statement of assurance and evidence for each of the following that the institution:
    - i. assists students in seeking title IV student aid funds for those courses, modules or components of the academic program that the institution contributes to the development or formation of the student's mastery of competencies;
    - ii. has policies and procedures to address the disbursement of financial aid, and tuition charges and refunds;
    - iii. has the option to charge a reasonable fee for its assessment of a student's prior learning used to satisfy one or more competencies required in the program's curriculum and the transcription of those competencies; and
    - iv. will charge tuition only for those courses, modules, components, and services that the institution contributes to the development or formation of the student or for the term in which the student is enrolled in the direct assessment program.
3. Assessment
- a. Describe how the competencies will be developed and assessed and by whom (include these person(s) on the Faculty Roster with their qualifications)
  - b. Describe how student mastery of each competency will be determined.

- c. Describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies are comparable to those required in the traditional formats (for general education and disciplinary courses, if applicable).
  - d. Describe how faculty members will be trained in competency-based direct assessment.
  - e. Provide [Common Content D](#) – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes (p. 79), relative to the proposed change. Describe how effectiveness of the program(s) offered via competency-based direct assessment will be assessed.
4. Faculty and Other Resources
- a. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications (p. 76), relative to the proposed change. Substitute individual competencies or sets of related competencies for courses. The Faculty Roster must clearly demonstrate a faculty member's qualification to teach the competencies to which they are assigned.
  - b. Provide [Common Content C](#) – Resources (p. 77), relative to the proposed change.
  - c. Describe technical support available to students and faculty engaged in this competency-based direct assessment program.



## Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Non-Title IV Entities – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. The program or programs for which the entity/entities will provide academic content.
2. The rationale for entering into the agreement.
3. A description of the expected benefits to (a) the students and (b) the institution.
4. The name and contact information for at least one person at the institution and at each participating entity.
5. Demonstrate the institution's determination that the entity or entities in the agreement are non-title IV entities for the purpose of substantive change as provided in the *Cooperative Academic Arrangements Definitions and Guidelines* section of this policy.
6. A statement of the institution's intent for students enrolled in the program(s) covered under the agreement to be eligible to receive title IV federal financial aid including the portion of each program or programs that will be eligible.
  - a. If the intent is for students to receive title IV aid,
    - i. demonstrate the institution has assessed and reached a good-faith conclusion of the program(s) title IV eligibility under the terms of the agreement, and
    - ii. if any portion of any program or programs will not be eligible for title IV aid, demonstrate the institution's plan to communicate this information to the affected students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.
  - b. If the intent is students will not receive title IV aid, demonstrate the institution's plan to communicate this information to the affected students prior to initial matriculation and to any other impacted party/parties.
7. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications (p. 76), relative to the proposed change.
8. A copy of a signed and dated written agreement amongst all parties to include:
  - a. roles and responsibilities of all parties,
  - b. a description of the regularly scheduled evaluation process to validate quality and integrity of the content,
  - c. a description of the regularly scheduled review and approval by all parties of course content and, as warranted, program curricula,
  - d. assessment of student learning outcomes and acceptable thresholds of demonstrated student learning,
  - e. statements that
    - i. SACSCOC accreditation does not extend to the non-SACSCOC entities and
    - ii. the SACSCOC institution is responsible for ensuring compliance by the participating entity/entities, and
  - f. provisions for the regular review of the agreement including renewal and termination of the agreement.



## Method of Delivery – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. The name of the program (to indicate the discipline).
2. The credential to be awarded (e.g., Associate of Arts, Master of Accounting).
3. The instructional level (associate, baccalaureate, master's, education specialist, or doctoral, if not obvious from the credential).
4. The method of delivery to be added: competency-based education, distance education, or face-to-face instruction.
5. The intended implementation date.
6. If the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION, provide an assessment of the impact of the addition of a method of delivery relative to the reason the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.
7. Demonstrate the addition of a method of delivery will not negatively impact student learning outcomes, student support services, library and learning/information resources, or institutional financial stability.
8. If the institution is seeking method of delivery approval due to its participation in the federal Prison Education Program, include the institution's SACSCOC PEP approval date and case identification (Case ID).

*Reminder:* Method of delivery approval is required only for institutions on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION and for institutions already approved by SACSCOC for Prison Education Programs (PEPs) that are adding, for the first time, a method of delivery not previously used in its PEPs.



## New Program – Approval

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide [Common Content A](#) – Background and Context (p. 75), relative to the proposed change.
2. Provide the curriculum for the entire program.
3. Provide program-specific goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program.
4. Describe how the student learning outcomes for the program will be assessed.
5. Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program. Do not provide syllabi or catalogs (though course description *excerpts* from a catalog are acceptable).
6. Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program.
7. Provide the planned method(s) of delivery, as defined in policy, of the program.
8. Provide the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered, i.e., on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s). (Providing this information does not replace submitting a notification or prospectus for approval, if necessary, of an off-campus instructional site as required by policy.)
9. Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (policies for awarding credit) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
10. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program.
11. For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in the traditional formats have been achieved.
12. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications (p. 76), relative to the proposed change.
13. Provide [Common Content C](#) – Resources (p. 77), relative to the proposed change.
14. Provide [Common Content D](#) – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes (p. 79), relative to the proposed change.



## Program Closure

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. Provide the closure date, defined by SACSCOC as the date when students are no longer *admitted*.
2. Provide a communication plan to inform all affected parties of the closure to include
  - a. how each of the following will be informed for the closure:
    - i. currently enrolled students,
    - ii. students with lapsed enrollment (i.e., not currently enrolled but recently enrolled), and
    - iii. prospective students.
  - b. how faculty and staff will be informed, viz., admissions and recruiting / marketing staffs; and
  - c. how community or industry partners will be informed. If not applicable, provide an affirmative statement to that effect.
3. If the institution is providing options for students to complete at another institution(s), provide copies of all planned communication from the institution and from the teach-out institution(s) related to the closure. All communication must demonstrate the institutions are making accurate statements about students' ability to transfer credits to the teach-out institution(s) and disclose tuition, fees, and other costs at the teach-out institution(s).
4. An explanation of how all affected students will be helped to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption or additional costs.
5. An explanation of whether the students subject to the teach-out plan will incur additional charges or other expenses because of the teach-out and, if so, how the students will be notified.
6. Copies of signed teach-out agreements with other institutions, if applicable.
7. A description of how faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employment.

*Note:* Do not submit individually identifiable student information.



## Program Length Change

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. Provide a description of the program.
2. Provide the intended implementation date.
3. Identify which condition describes this program; i.e., why the program length change is being submitted for approval (indicate one only):
  - a. the program's length is changing by 25% or more –AND– students' expected time to completion is changing by more than one term;
  - b. the institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION –AND– the program's length is changing by 25% or more; or
  - c. the institution is seeking approval as an exception to policy-defined criteria to meet federal requirement that limit program length for some gainful employment programs.
4. Describe the rationale for the increase or decrease in program length.
5. Describe how the change was approved by the institution.
6. Describe how the faculty participated in the review and approval of the planned change.
7. Provide a 'before' and 'after' comparison of the curriculum.
8. Describe changes in student learning outcomes because of the program length change.
9. Provide an analysis of the impact of the change in student learning outcomes.
10. For a decrease in program length, explain how program quality and integrity are maintained with fewer credit hours and/or a shorter time-to-completion.
11. Provide an explanation of the impact on students' time-to-completion.
12. Provide an explanation of the financial impact to students.
13. Provide an explanation of the impact on staffing and faculty workloads.



## Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes

### Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus) by Extensive Review

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. If multiple sites are proposed in a consolidated prospectus (see qualifying criteria), address each site separately, viz., the description of the physical resources and a Faculty Roster Form separated by site.
2. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution's existing site).
3. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers only).
4. The intended implementation date.
5. Indicate if the site will be a branch campus.
6. If the site will be a branch campus, demonstrate the site will meet each of the following criteria:
  - a. The site is geographically apart from an institution's main campus.
  - b. Instruction is delivered at the site.
  - c. The site is permanent.
  - d. The site offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
  - e. The site has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.
  - f. The site has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

*For the institutional level review –*

7. The institution must demonstrate, at an institutional level, the capacity to effectively oversee and provide ongoing support for off-campus instructional sites / additional locations (including branch campuses, as applicable), by the following:
  - a. Demonstrating how the institution will have administrative oversight of off-campus instructional sites / additional locations that ensures academic control of all off-campus instructional sites.
  - b. Demonstrating how the institution will have academic assessment and evaluation processes that include the regular and robust assessment and evaluation of each of the institution's off-campus instructional sites / additional locations.
  - c. Demonstrating how the institution will engage in ongoing and thorough long-range planning processes for expansion of instructional and other services to off-campus instructional sites / additional locations.
  - d. Demonstrating financial resources and financial stability by submitting for review the institution's two most recent financial statement audits.

**Note:** *As part of the extensive review, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will review the institution's audits and SACSCOC financial responsibility score based on financial data submitted by the institution as part of its annual financial profile. If it is not satisfied with the institution's financial stability, the SACSCOC Board of Trustee may deny approval.*

*For the site-specific review –*

8. Provide [Common Content A](#) – Background and Context (p. 75), relative to the proposed change.
9. Describe the educational program(s) to be offered at the site. If a program to be offered at the site is a new program requiring approval, also provide the prospectus information for New Program – Approval.
10. Provide documentation of approval to operate in the state where the site is located if the site is outside of the state of the institution’s main campus (in addition to the state approval evidence in Common Content A).
11. Provide the course schedule and course descriptions to be taught during the first year of operation; do not provide syllabi.
12. Provide [Common Content B](#) – Faculty Qualifications (p. 76), relative to the proposed change. All courses to be taught during the first year of operation must be assigned to at least one faculty member on the Faculty Roster.
13. Provide [Common Content C](#) – Resources (p. 77), relative to the proposed change.
14. Provide [Common Content D](#) - Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes (p. 79), relative to the proposed change.



## Off-campus Instructional Site Closure

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. Provide the closure date, defined by SACSCOC as the date when students are no longer *admitted*.
2. Provide a communication plan to inform all affected parties of the closure to include
  - a. how each of the following will be informed for the closure:
    - i. currently enrolled students,
    - ii. students with lapsed enrollment (i.e., not currently enrolled but recently enrolled), and
    - iii. prospective students.
  - b. how faculty and staff will be informed, viz., admissions and recruiting / marketing staffs; and
  - c. how community or industry partners will be informed. If not applicable, provide an affirmative statement to that effect.
3. If the institution is providing options for students to complete at another institution(s), provide copies of all planned communication from the institution and from the teach-out institution(s) related to the closure. All communication must demonstrate the institutions are making accurate statements about students' ability to transfer credits to the teach-out institution(s) and disclose tuition, fees, and other costs at the teach-out institution(s).
4. An explanation of how all affected students will be helped to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption or additional costs.
5. An explanation of whether the students subject to the teach-out plan will incur additional charges or other expenses because of the teach-out and, if so, how the students will be notified.
6. Copies of signed teach-out agreements with other institutions, if applicable.
7. A description of how faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employment.

*Note:* Do not submit individually identifiable student information.



## Other Changes

### Implementation Extension

Submit a request to include the following:

1. The Case ID of the previously approved substantive change. Do not submit requests for multiple extensions in one request; submit each separately as needed. If more than one is included, only the first will be reviewed.
2. The type of substantive change as defined in policy that was previously approved; e.g., New Program - Approval, Off-campus Instructional Site Approval by Limited Review, etc.
3. The approval date of the previously approved substantive change.
4. The requested implementation extension date up to a maximum of one year (i.e., 12 months) after the approval date.
5. A statement of assurance that previous institutional, institutional governing board, and/or state approval(s) are unchanged as described in the institution's original submission for approval of the substantive change.
6. Narrative answers to the following questions:
  - a. What is the reason for the implementation extension?
  - b. How will the change differ compared to what was originally approved including, but not limited to, differences in student enrollment and the institution's financial resources to support the change? If none, explain.
  - c. How will the institution ensure the quality and integrity of the change given the differences described in the preceding item? If none, explain.



## Appendix B: Glossary

*This glossary provides basic definitions of commonly used substantive change words and phrases. It is designed as a quick reference only. Refer to the more complete and detailed information elsewhere in this policy and in related policies.*

**Acquisition:** Acquisition is the sale, exchange, or transfer of a component of an institution’s or entity’s assets to a SACSCOC accredited institution.

*(See also merger/consolidation)*

### **Additional location**

*See off-campus instructional site / additional location*

**Approval:** An official action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or delegated senior staff enabling an institution to implement a proposed substantive change. All changes requiring approval are defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. An institution secures approval by submitting a substantive change prospectus or application subject to satisfactory review by the Board of Trustees or delegated senior staff.

**Branch campus:** An off-campus instruction site / additional location

- that is geographically apart from an institution’s main campus,
- where instruction is delivered, and
- is independent of the main campus of an institution.

An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it

1. is permanent;
2. offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential;
3. has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
4. has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

**Closure:** The ending of instruction

- in an educational program,
- at off-campus instructional site,

- in an educational program at an off-campus instructional site or main campus,
- by a method of delivery, or
- at an entire institution
- such that a student cannot complete their program of study as planned.

*(See also teach-out agreement and teach-out plan)*

**Competency-based education:** A method of delivery in which competencies are learned through interaction with faculty and an academic credential is earned based on what students demonstrate they can do. A competency is a well-defined statement of what a person can do as a result of learning. Progression and completion are measured by demonstrated attainment of competencies.

*(See also competency-based education by course/credit-based approach, competency-based education by direct assessment, and method of delivery)*

**Competency-based education by course / credit-based approach:** Demonstrating competencies is embedded in a traditional curriculum with courses completed, credits earned, and a credential awarded. Students typically enroll in an academic term and course credits are awarded at the end of the term by demonstrating mastery of the competencies associated with a course. Students may accelerate learning through demonstration of competencies. Transcripts record courses and grades, though the institution may opt to maintain a separate transcript of competencies.

**Competency-based education by direct assessment:** Progression and completion of a program is based solely on demonstrating mastery of prescribed competencies. There are no academic terms (i.e., calendars), courses, or

credit hours. Students' progress through a program's competencies at their own pace within limits, if any, established by the institution. The academic transcript consists of successfully demonstrated competencies and the level of mastery attained.

**Cooperative academic arrangement:** An agreement between a SACSCOC-accredited institution and another entity (or entities) to deliver program content recorded on the SACSCOC institution's transcript as its own (see also Standard 10.9 (Cooperative academic arrangements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*). Examples include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, collaborative agreements with international institutions, and contractual instruction.

**Correspondence courses:** Courses in which students and instructors are not in the same locations and in which instructional materials and learning assessments (such as examinations, assignments, creative works, etc.) are delivered electronically or by mail. Interaction between instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Courses are usually self-paced within limits.

#### **Direct Assessment**

*See competency-based education by direct assessment*

**Distance education:** A method of delivery in which 50% or more of instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same location. It includes synchronous (live or in real-time) and asynchronous (not live or in real-time) instruction.

*(See also method of delivery)*

#### **Distance learning**

*See distance education*

#### **Educational program**

*See program*

**Face-to-face instruction:** A method of delivery in which 50% or more of instruction occurs when students and instructors are in the same location.  
*(See also method of delivery)*

**Federal regulations:** Rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as codified in the Code of Federal Regulation (C.F.R.) including but not limited to 34 C.F.R. § 600, 602, 603, 654, 668, and 674; viz., § 600.2 (definitions), § 602.22 (substantive changes and other reporting requirements), § 602.24 (additional procedures certain institutional agencies must have), and § 668 Subpart P (Prison Education Programs).

**Geographically apart** (or geographically separate): Non-contiguous locations independent of distance.

*See also off-campus instructional site / additional location (and branch campus)*

**Instructional level:** For courses and programs, the level of content and rigor corresponding to traditional academic degree levels: associate, baccalaureate, master's, education specialist, or doctoral.

**Level authorization:** SACSCOC authorization for an institution to offer instruction and credentials at a level lower than the highest level for which an institution is approved to offer instruction and credentials.

**Level classification:** An institutional status indicating the highest level for which an institution is approved to offer instruction and credentials.

**Merger/consolidation:** The sale, exchange, or transfer of all assets of at least one institution or entity to a SACSCOC accredited institution. Following a merger/consolidation, only one institution remains in operation as a separate institution or entity.

*(See also acquisition)*

**Method of delivery:** The principal method by which instruction is delivered to include:

- competency-based education (all forms),
- distance education, and
- face-to-face instruction.

**Notification:** An official communication from an institution to SACSCOC as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. A notification is complete only when accepted by SACSCOC upon satisfactory review by staff.

*(See also approval)*

**Off-campus instructional site / additional location:** A location

- geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus and
- where instruction is delivered.
- An off-campus instructional site may qualify as a branch campus.

*(See also branch campus)*

**Oversight Entity:** Under the federal Prison Education Program (PEP), the state department of corrections, Federal Bureau of Prisons, or other entity responsible for facilities where confined or incarcerated students are located.

**Program:** a coherent course of study leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, diploma, certificate, or other generally recognized credential.

*Exception:* General education, for substantive change purposes, is usually considered a program even if a credential is not awarded. See also Standard 8.2.b (Student outcomes: general education) Standard 9.3 (General education requirements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

**Prison Education Program (PEP):** A federal program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

**Substantive Change Restriction:** Additional or different requirements for institutions meeting defined criteria. The criteria are defined in this policy and the additional or different requirements are identified for each substantive change type. These restrictions and the criteria for which institutions are affected are required by federal regulations.

**Teach-out:** The process and time period of a teach-out plan.

*(See also closure, teach-out agreement, and teach-out plan)*

**Teach-out plan:** A written plan developed by an institution for students to complete their programs of study because it decided to end a program, off-campus instructional site, method of delivery, or to close the institution. A teach-out plan provides an orderly process, the equitable treatment of students, minimal disruption and additional costs to students, and covers all enrolled students regardless of their progress to completion.

*(See also closure, teach-out, and teach-out agreement)*

**Teach-out agreement:** An optional written agreement with an institution or entity under which students covered by a teach-out plan may complete their programs of study. A teach-out agreement may include student eligibility criteria, time limits, fee waivers, tuition parity, or other negotiated terms.

*(See also closure, teach-out, and teach-out plan)*



## Appendix C: Quick Reference

### Substantive Change Types

This quick reference is designed as a summary only. It is not intended to replace a careful reading and understanding of policy. As a summary of select information, it provides an efficient reference to identify substantive change types and to make comparisons across types.

| Substantive Change Type                                                                                    | Requires     |                         |                         |                       | Visit      |          | Other      |                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------|------------|------------------------|
|                                                                                                            | Notification | Approval – Senior Staff | Approval – Exec Council | Approval – Full Board | Contingent | Required | Review Fee | Sub Change Restriction |
| <i>This is a summary only. Always consult policy for complete information of substantive change types.</i> |              |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| <b>INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES</b>                                                                               |              |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| Acquisition                                                                                                |              |                         |                         | ●                     |            | ●        | ●          |                        |
| Change Measure Progress to Completion                                                                      |              | ●                       |                         |                       |            |          | ●          |                        |
| CBE Course-Credit Approach-Institutional Approval                                                          |              | ●                       |                         |                       |            |          | ●          |                        |
| Distance Ed-Institutional-level Approval                                                                   |              | ●                       |                         |                       |            |          | ●          |                        |
| Governance Change                                                                                          |              |                         |                         | ●                     |            | ●        | ●          |                        |
| Institution Closure                                                                                        |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| Institutional Contingency Teach-out                                                                        |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| Level Authorization Addition                                                                               |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            |          | ●          |                        |
| Level Change to a Higher Level                                                                             |              |                         |                         | ●                     |            | ●        | ●          |                        |
| Merger / Consolidation                                                                                     |              |                         |                         | ●                     |            | ●        | ●          |                        |
| Mission Change                                                                                             |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            |          | ●          |                        |
| Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change                                                        |              |                         |                         | ●                     |            | ●        | ●          |                        |
| Prison Education Program – Institutional-level Approval                                                    |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            | ●        | ●          |                        |
| <b>PROGRAM CHANGES</b>                                                                                     |              |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| CBE Direct Assessment-Approval                                                                             |              |                         |                         | ●                     |            | ●        | ●          |                        |
| Coop Acad Arr Non-Title IV Entities-Approval                                                               |              | ●                       |                         |                       |            |          | ●          | ●                      |
| Coop Acad Arr Non-Title IV Entities-Notification                                                           | ●            |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            | ●                      |
| Method of Delivery-Approval                                                                                |              | ●                       |                         |                       |            |          |            | ●                      |
| Method of Delivery-Notification                                                                            | ●            |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            | ●                      |
| New Program-Approval                                                                                       |              | ●                       |                         |                       |            |          | ●          | ●                      |
| Program Closure                                                                                            |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| Program Length Change                                                                                      |              | ●                       |                         |                       |            |          | ●          | ●                      |
| <b>OFF-CAMPUS INSTRUCTIONAL SITE (OCIS) CHANGES</b>                                                        |              |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| OCIS Notification                                                                                          | ●            |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| OCIS Approval Extensive Review                                                                             |              |                         |                         | ●                     | ●          |          | ●          | ●                      |
| OCIS Closure                                                                                               |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            |          |            |                        |



| Substantive Change Type                                                                                    | Requires     |                         |                         |                       | Visit      |          | Other      |                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------|------------|------------------------|
|                                                                                                            | Notification | Approval – Senior Staff | Approval – Exec Council | Approval – Full Board | Contingent | Required | Review Fee | Sub Change Restriction |
| <i>This is a summary only. Always consult policy for complete information of substantive change types.</i> |              |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| <b>OTHER CHANGES</b>                                                                                       |              |                         |                         |                       |            |          |            |                        |
| Implementation Extension                                                                                   |              |                         | ●                       |                       |            |          |            |                        |

Notes:

- Some of the types are abbreviated in this table; refer to the policy text for the full-text type.
- Action requirements are for an institution *not* on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION; see policy for requirements for an institution that *is* on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.
- An institution on sanction when a substantive change is submitted is ineligible for Executive Council review or senior staff review (except for closures); full Board review is required.



## Conditions for SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION and for an Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan

This quick reference is designed as a summary only. It is not intended to replace a careful reading and understanding of policy. As a summary of select information, it provides an efficient reference to identify the conditions for SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION and for an Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan.

| IF (Condition)                                                                                                                               | THEN (Consequence)                         |                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>This is a summary only. Always consult policy for complete information.</i>                                                               | The institution is:                        |                                                                               |
|                                                                                                                                              | on<br>Substantive<br>Change<br>Restriction | required to<br>submit an<br>Institutional<br>Contingency<br>Teach-out<br>Plan |
| <b>SACSCOC PLACES THE INSTITUTION ON:</b>                                                                                                    |                                            |                                                                               |
| Warning                                                                                                                                      | ●                                          |                                                                               |
| Probation                                                                                                                                    | ●                                          | ●                                                                             |
| Probation for Good Cause                                                                                                                     | ●                                          | ●                                                                             |
| <b>SACSCOC:</b>                                                                                                                              |                                            |                                                                               |
| Acts to end an institution's accreditation                                                                                                   |                                            | ●                                                                             |
| <b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (USDE) PLACES THE INSTITUTION:</b>                                                                           |                                            |                                                                               |
| Under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs                                                          | ●                                          |                                                                               |
| Under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs —AND— directs the institution to submit a teach-out plan | ●                                          | ●                                                                             |
| On reimbursement for federal financial aid                                                                                                   |                                            | ●                                                                             |
| On heightened cash monitoring for federal financial aid                                                                                      |                                            | ●                                                                             |
| On emergency action or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate the institution's participation in federal financial aid                    |                                            | ●                                                                             |
| <b>A STATE AUTHORITY:</b>                                                                                                                    |                                            |                                                                               |
| Revokes an institution's authorization                                                                                                       |                                            | ●                                                                             |



## Appendix D: Summary of Recent Changes

- December 2025: Multiple additions and revisions (in approximate order of appearance) –
  - Added approval pathway by senior staff explanation and identified eligible types.
  - Removed 25 substantive change types from policy:
    - Acquisition - 6 month notification in advance of a prospectus
    - Clock-Credit Hour Conversion
    - Competency-based Education by Direct Assessment – Notification
    - Cooperative Academic Arrangement with Title IV Entities
    - Correspondence Education
    - Dual Academic
    - Governance Change - 6 month notification in advance of a prospectus
    - Institution Relocation
    - Joint Academic Award with non-SACSCOC Institution(s) or Entity(ies)
    - Joint Academic Award with SACSCOC Institution(s)
    - Level Authorization Removal
    - Level Change to a Lower Level
    - Merger / Consolidation - 6 month notification in advance of a prospectus
    - New Program – Notification
    - OCIS Approval Limited Review
    - OCIS Name or Address Change
    - OCIS Relocation - Branch
    - OCIS Relocation - Non-Branch
    - OCIS Re-open
    - Ownership, Means of Control, or Legal Status Change - 6 month notification in advance of a prospectus
    - Program Designed for Prior Learning-Approval
    - Program Designed for Prior Learning-Notification
    - Program Re-open
    - Temporary Emergency Relocation of Instruction - Approval
    - Temporary Emergency Relocation of Instruction - Notification
  - Miscellaneous clarifications and typographical corrections
- June 2025: Multiple additions and revisions (in approximate order of appearance) –
  - Added minor edits to the policy section for clarifications.
  - Removed all references to the *Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level* policy: all level change information revised and added to the substantive change policy to permit the separate outdated level change policy to be retired.
  - Deleted and replaced all existing level change language (a) to incorporate all level change information previously maintained in the separate level change policy and (b) to accommodate new substantive change types to more efficiently manage changes to level status and level authorizations.

---

*Note:* A redline (markup) version of all changes will be made available when possible.



- Added miscellaneous clarifications to Institutional Contingency Teach-out Plan.
- Added to the Program Re-open requirements that changes to level status or level authorization cannot be accomplished by re-opening a previously closed program.
- Added new prospectus content in Appendix A for Level Authorization Addition.
- Added new prospectus content in Appendix A for Level Change to a Higher Level.
- Edited New Program - Approval prospectuses content: (a) clarified the curriculum for the entire program must be submitted and (b) removed the requirement to submit a projected schedule of courses.
- Corrected an internal inconsistency regarding the criteria for a Program Length Change.
- Added two new terms to the Appendix B glossary: level authorization and level classification.
- Updated level change items in the Appendix C quick reference table of substantive change types.



**Document history:**

*Revised for the Principles of Accreditation: February 2004*  
*Adopted: Commission on Colleges, June 2008*  
*Revised: Board of Trustees, Commission on Colleges, June 2009, June 2011, December 2011*  
*Revised: Executive Council, March 2012 and Board of Trustees, June 2012*  
*Revised: Board of Trustees, December 2012, December 2013*  
*Updated: June 2014*  
*Edited: January 2015*  
*Adopted: Executive Council, March 2016*  
*Edited, July 2016*  
*Revised, SACSCOC Board of Trustees, December 2016*  
*Revised for the Principles of Accreditation: January 2018*  
*Revised: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, June 2018; December 2018; September 2020; March 2021; June 2021*  
*Revised: Executive Council, March 2022; March 2023, June 2024; December 2025*

**Document History: Procedures**

*June 2009*  
*Edited: February 2013*  
*Edited: January 2015*  
*Edited: November 2015; September 2020; June 2021*  
*Edited: May 2016, July 2016*  
*Edited for the Principles of Accreditation: May 2018*  
*Revised: December 2018; December 2020; March 2021; June 2021; December 2021; June 2022; June 2024; December 2024; June 2025; December 2025*

###