



POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

NUMBER: 1.40123
DIVISION: Academic Affairs
TITLE: Substantive Change
DATE: April 2, 2012
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I. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets forth the steps and requirements for faculty, administrators, and staff to monitor substantive changes occurring within academic programs at Western Kentucky University, including changes to programs, certain types of changes to courses, where and how programs are offered, and institution-level changes.

A. Definition of Substantive Change

1. WKU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), which defines *substantive changes* as “significant modifications or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” A more detailed explanation of SACSCOC requirements and a list of specific types of changes that constitute a substantive change can be found at <http://www.SACS.org/SubstantiveChange.asp> .

B. Types of Change that may Constitute Substantive Change

1. *Program changes* that could result in substantive change include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
 - b. Addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution’s current accreditation or reaffirmation

- c. Substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
 - d. Establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program
 - e. Closing a program
 - f. Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution
 - g. Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs
2. Institution-wide changes that could result in substantive change include, but are not limited to, the following:
- a. Change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
 - b. Change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of WKU
 - c. Change from clock hours to credit hours
 - d. Establishment of a branch campus or merger/consolidation with another institution
 - e. Closing a off-campus site, branch campus or institution
 - f. Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
 - g. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution

II. Policy

1. Any unit within WKU that intends to make a change to its curricular offerings, as noted in Section I.B.1.a.-g., including collaborative academic arrangements, must take due steps to verify whether such a change constitutes a substantive change.
2. If the change does constitute a substantive change, Academic Affairs will ensure that appropriate notification to SACSCOC occurs.

III. Procedure

A. Responsibilities

To ensure compliance with this policy,

1. The Associate **Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence** ~~Vice-President for Planning & Program Development~~ will:
 - a. Develop and maintain a website with examples of substantive changes at: http://www.wku.edu/academicaffairs/pd/sacs_substantive_changes.php
 - b. Provide the deans, department heads/chairs, and faculty information about the substantive change policy;

- c. Monitor programmatic additions and changes that proceed through the curriculum change process;
 - d. Identify those proposed changes that require notification to the SACS Commission on Colleges; and
 - e. Work with WKU department heads and deans to determine if proposed changes constitute a substantive change.
2. Department heads/chairs and deans are responsible for:
- a. Completing, in a timely manner, the form for changes in programs under their charge; and
 - b. Working with the **Associate Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence** ~~Vice President for Planning & Program Development~~ to gather relevant information to complete the notification process of a substantive change to SACSCOC.
3. The Division of Extended Learning and Outreach (DELO) and the **Associate Vice President of Extended Learning and Outreach** ~~Associate Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence Regional Higher Education~~ will monitor changes to programs as they add off-campus sites and dual-credit courses and liaise with pertinent departments about programs to determine whether substantive changes have occurred.
- a. If substantive changes have not occurred, DELO will continue monitoring
 - b. If substantive changes have occurred, DELO will inform the SACSCOC Liaison accordingly
4. The **Vice President for Enrollment & Student Experience (or designee)** ~~Chief Enrollment/Graduation Officer~~ will monitor those programs involving joint admissions and the **Associate Provost for Global Learning and International Affairs will monitor** ~~and~~ international academic arrangements. ~~Each~~ will liaise with the **Associate Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence** ~~Vice President for Planning & Program Development~~ to determine whether revisions to programs constitute substantive changes and will report any substantive changes as necessary to the SACSCOC Liaison.
5. In the event that the Office of Academic Affairs becomes aware that a substantive change has been made prior to notifying SACSCOC, the WKU SACSCOC liaison will work with SACSCOC to notify them of the unreported change, following pertinent SACSCOC policies.

B. Processes

- 1. Those unsure if an action or actions require WKU to notify SACSCOC of a substantive change should contact the ~~Vice Associate~~ **Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence** and WKU SACSCOC Liaison for clarification and consultation.

2. When a unit within WKU intends to make a change to its curricular offerings, the appropriate coordinator should work with the Associate **Provost for Faculty & Academic Excellence** ~~Vice President for Planning & Program Development~~, to make sure that the appropriate parties are notified in a timely manner.
3. As soon as the decision is made that an action may constitute a substantive change, department chairs/heads or deans should contact the ~~Vice~~ **Associate** Provost **for Faculty & Academic Excellence** and WKU SACSCOC Liaison to begin the substantive change process, if necessary.
4. The WKU SACSCOC Liaison, in consultation with the Provost, will
 - a. Liaise with SACSCOC to determine which SACSCOC procedures should be followed;
 - b. File the appropriate notification and/or prospectus as deemed necessary;
 - c. Coordinate any follow-up actions required of Western Kentucky University by SACSCOC
5. For substantive changes that are institution wide changes (i.e. I. B. 2.), the Provost will work in conjunction with the President to inform SACSCOC in a timely manner of those changes, following the procedure and guidelines as posted on the SACSCOC website.

IV. Related Policies

V. Reason for Revision:

February 2013

Changes to I.B.1., I.B.2., and III.A.3 due to SACSCOC requirement changes effective January 1, 2013.

January, 2016

Changes to II.1, III.A, II.B.1, II.B.3 and non-substantive changes as part of the five-year policy review per Policy 0.000V Policy on Policies.

December, 2019

Revisions reflect personnel changes within the Office of the Provost.