

Mary Baldwin University

Substantive Change Policy – 2/17/2012

Updated – 9/16/2022

Policy

Mary Baldwin University is responsible for complying with the substantive change policy set forth by its accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Specifically, SACSCOC Principle 14.2 states:

"The institution has a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported in accordance with SACSCOC policy." (*Principles of Accreditation, 2018*, p. 141)

SACSCOC defines substantive change as "a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution." Substantive changes, including those required under federal regulations, include the following:

- Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs (>25% new content as determined by the institution), or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated. ("programs" = transcriptable credentials such as majors, minors, degree, certificates, emphases. *Institutional definition*). See pgs. 39-40 of the [Substantive Change Policy and Procedure](#) document for more information.
- 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 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.
- 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.

Substantive changes, cont.

- 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 programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student's prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- 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.

Other requirements apply and can be found in the [Substantive Change Policy and Procedure](#). They include but are not limited to the following:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change.
- An institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2 (Substantive change) of the Principles of Accreditation and with the Substantive Change Policy and Procedures and related policies, viz.,
 - [Advertising and Student Recruitment](#) [PDF];
 - [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) [PDF];
 - [Credit Hours](#) [PDF];
 - [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) [PDF];
 - [Distance and Correspondence Education](#) [PDF];
 - [Dual Enrollment](#) [PDF];
 - [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF];
 - [Request for a Period of Noncompliance](#) [PDF]; and
 - [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF].

Resources

- SACSCOC [Substantive Change Policy and Procedure](#)
- SACSCOC [Principles of Accreditation](#)
- SACSCOC [Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation](#)

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors:

Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors are responsible for

1. Becoming familiar with policies and procedures in the SACSCOC substantive change document referenced above,
2. Notifying the university-appointed Accreditation Liaison as early as possible about proposals that may be considered substantive changes,
3. Providing the Accreditation Liaison with the supporting data and documentation necessary for reporting such changes to the SACSCOC,
4. Adhering to any timeline set forth by SACSCOC for purposes of review and prior approval of substantive changes.

Responsibilities of the Accreditation Liaison:

The university-appointed Accreditation Liaison is responsible for

1. providing the substantive change policy to all Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors on an annual basis,
2. maintaining a current copy of the SACSCOC policy available to the University community on request,
3. working with the Vice Presidents, Deans, and Directors to determine whether a proposal is a substantive change and to generate the necessary letters, prospectus , and other documents for reporting to SACSCOC,
4. if proposal was evaluated and determined not to be a substantive change, maintaining a record of rationale for that determination,
5. if proposal was determined to be a substantive change, submitting or helping to coordinate the submission of the requested substantive change documents to SACSCOC, and
6. coordinating any necessary follow-up action.

Procedure

With the assistance of the Accreditation Liaison, the Vice President for Academic Affairs will query academic departments, relevant administrative offices, and graduate and undergraduate curriculum committees on an on-going basis to determine changes to which the substantive change policy may apply. This may include changes, additions, or closings to academic programs, collaborative educational agreements, program offerings through distance- learning, establishment of new off-site locations, or any other change which may be considered a “substantive change” under the policy. If the change was determined to qualify as a substantive change under the current criteria identified by SACSCOC, the disposition of the SACS notification will be reported as requested to the University community. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will prepare an annual report to the faculty and Board of Trustees showing initiatives that

were considered for substantive change designation and present this information at the annual April meeting of the Board of Trustees' Academic Affairs Committee. A copy of this notification will be retained in the minutes of the Board of Trustees.

Late Notification

If an implemented, but unreported, change should occur that is determined to be substantive to the university, the appropriate Vice President, Dean, or Director must notify the university-appointed Accreditation Liaison immediately. The Accreditation Liaison must then notify SACSCOC according to the policy.

Accreditation Liaison

The current accreditation liaison is

Ms. Carol Creager, University Librarian & SACSCOC Liaison
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