

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY
Manual of Policies and Procedures
Jacksonville State University

POLICY NUMBER: II:10

DATE: June 2003

REVISION/REVIEW DATE: Sept 2008, Dec 2011, Dec 2012, March 2021

SUBJECT: Substantive Change Policy and Procedure

APPROVED: Don C. Killingsworth, Jr., President

PURPOSE

The purpose of this substantive change policy and procedure is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion as required by SACSCOC [Substantive Change Policies and Procedures](#) and to provide faculty and administrators with instructions on ALL academic substantive change requirements. In addition to academic substantive changes, procedures to address changes that are administrative in nature are also included herein.

POLICY

Academic Substantive Changes

Proposals involving academic program changes (distance programs, new degree programs/majors, change of level, and off-campus instructional site changes) originate within the academic department, school, or college proposing the change. Internal review and curriculum approvals are processed either through the University Curriculum Committee (undergraduate changes/programs) or the Graduate Curriculum Committee (graduate changes/programs).

By SACSCOC definition:

A program's method of delivery applies to how the majority – 50% or more – of content is delivered. If adding a method of delivery to a program that results in 50% or more of the program being delivered by that method, then notification is required; if it is less than 50%, then notification isn't required.

Examples:

1. If an institution currently offers a program by face-to-face instruction only and converts the program to 100% delivery by distance education, then that is considered adding a distance education method of delivery. (It's also a closure of the face-to-face delivery which requires a teach-out and closure approval.)

2. If an institution currently offers a program by distance education only and adds as an additional option 100% delivery by face-to-face instruction – i.e., students may complete the program by distance education or by face-to-face instruction – then that is considered adding a face-to-face method of delivery.
3. If an institution currently offers a program by face-to-face instruction and converts the program to a hybrid delivery with 60% face-to-face and 30% course/credit-based competency-based education, then that is not considered adding competency-based education as a method of delivery because the majority of the course remains face-to-face.

Non-academic Substantive Changes

Institutional changes that are non-academic in nature (e.g., merger, name change, new campus, etc.) are processed through the appropriate internal channels and once approved by the JSU Board of Trustees when necessary, are submitted to appropriate external agencies for their review and approval prior to being implemented.

PROCEDURE

I. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

A. What is a substantive change and how should it be handled?

- Substantive change is defined by SACSCOC as “a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” The following outlines what does and does not constitute a substantive change: If less than 25% of the coursework needed to complete a program (degree, certificate, or diploma) is offered via distance education (100% of instruction is online OR the majority of instruction is online), reporting this to the Commission is NOT required.
- If from 25% to 49% of the coursework required for a program (degree, certificate, or diploma) is offered via distance education (100% of instruction is online OR the majority of instruction is online), the Commission MUST BE NOTIFIED in advance of the implementation of the change.
- If 50% or more of the coursework required for a program (degree, certificate, or diploma) is offered via distance education (100% of instruction is online OR the majority of instruction is online), the Commission MUST BE NOTIFIED at least six months in advance and a prospectus MUST BE SUBMITTED at least three months prior to the anticipated implementation date.
- If changes are larger scale, such as adding significantly different programs to the academic curriculum, the Commission MUST BE NOTIFIED at least six months in advance and a prospectus MUST BE SUBMITTED at least three months prior to the anticipated implementation date.

- If coursework is being offered at a more advanced level than that for which JSU is currently approved, the Commission MUST BE NOTIFIED at least 12 months in advance and an application for level change MUST BE SUBMITTED at least 9 months before the expected start of the proposed programs.
- If 50% or more of the coursework required for a program is offered at an off-campus site, the Commission MUST BE NOTIFIED at least six months in advance and a prospectus MUST BE SUBMITTED at least three months prior to the anticipated implementation date.

Note: Prospectuses and applications for level change must include a faculty roster (see [Faculty Roster Form](#) and [Faculty Roster Instructions](#)) presenting the qualifications of each faculty member in the program to teach the courses they are assigned.

Certain types of substantive changes, for example adding branch campuses, level changes, mergers/consolidations, changes in governance, and adding competency-based education require a visit by a substantive change committee to determine continued compliance with the Commission's [Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#). When a committee visit has been authorized by the President of the Commission, the institution will be asked to provide documentation of the impact of the change on selected requirements in the *Principles of Accreditation*.

Substantive Change **Notification** constitutes a letter from the institution's chief executive officer to the President of the Commission summarizing the proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the street address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site. The policy and procedures for review and reporting of institutional substantive change are outlined below.

B. SACSCOC Procedures for Reporting Substantive Change

(Note: These procedures address SACSCOC requirements; it is also understood that ACHE requirements for approval/reporting will also be followed.)

There are three procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes.

1. Procedure One for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation
2. Procedure Two for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Only Notification Prior to Implementation

3. Procedure Three for the Review and Approval of Consolidations/Mergers

For the various types of substantive changes (academic and non-academic), the following table indicates whether notification and/or SACSCOC approval is required as well as who has the responsibility for seeing that the process is properly followed. The table also indicates the associated SACSCOC notification/approval deadlines and the type of documentation required. See [Substantive Change Policies and Procedures](#) for required documentation and forms.

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Approval Required	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Responsible Parties
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	1	Yes	Yes	12 months	Department Head Dean Provost
Expanding at current degree level (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>)	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	Department Head Dean Provost
Initiating programs at a lower degree level	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	N/A
Initiating a branch campus	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	Provost President
Initiating Off-campus Sites...					
Student can obtain 50% or more credits toward program	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	Department Head
Student can obtain 25-49%	2	No	Yes	Prior to implementation	Dean
Student can obtain 24% or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	Provost
Adding significantly different programs at an approved site (<i>only if programs are currently approved</i>)	2	No	Yes	Prior to implementation	Department Head Dean Provost
Initiating distance learning...					
Offering 50% or more of program	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	Department Head Dean
Offering 25-49%	2	No	Yes	Prior to implementation	
Offering 24% or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Approval Required	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Responsible Parties
Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	No	Yes	Prior to implementation	Provost
Initiating a merger/consolidation	3	Yes	Yes	6 months	President BOT
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	President BOT
Relocating a campus	2	No	Yes	Prior to implementation	President BOT
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	President BOT
Significantly altering the length of a program	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	Department Head Dean Provost
Initiating degree completion programs	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	Department Head Dean
Closing an institution/program; initiating teach-out agreements (<i>see Commission policy</i>)	1	Yes	Yes	6 months	Department Head Dean Provost President

C. Steps in the Process for Academic Substantive Change

1. A department/program/college desires to make a change in the way programs are currently being offered. This change may involve an already existing program or a proposed new program. *The type of change must be evaluated based on the information provided in the table above.*
2. The curriculum review process in place within the department/college is followed and the change is either approved or denied at that level.
3. If the change is approved at the college level, the Curriculum Revision Request Form [\(Form #39\)](#) will be completed and sent to the chair of either the JSU Curriculum Committee (for undergraduate programs) or the Senior Director for Graduate Studies (for graduate programs)
4. For undergraduate changes, the JSU Curriculum Committee chair will review the request and determine if additional information is required. If so, he/she will inform the requesting college; if not, he/she will approve the change and send to the Provost/SVPAA/SACSCOC Liaison (or designee) who will evaluate the change and determine if it rises to the level of a substantive change based on SACSCOC definition of "What is a Substantive Change?"

5. For graduate change requests, the Senior Director of Graduate Studies will present the request for change to the Graduate Curriculum Committee which will either approve or deny the proposed change.
6. If requested changes (either undergraduate or graduate) are approved by the Provost/VPAA/SACSCOC Liaison (or designee) and are deemed to be substantive, the department/program/college will complete the necessary documentation consistent with the type of change involved (see above table). If requested changes are denied, the requestor may revise and resubmit.
7. The Provost/SVPAA/SACSCOC Liaison will discuss requests with the President who will support or deny submission of the proposed change to the JSU Board of Trustees for approval.
8. Once approved by the JSU Board of Trustees, the President will ensure that the proper notification/application/prospectus is submitted to Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and once approved by ACHE, submitted to SACSCOC ensuring that the proper timeline is followed based on the information provided in the table above.

D. Steps in the Process for Administrative (Non-Academic) Substantive Changes

Whereas the number and frequency of occurrence of non-academic substantive changes are expected to be few, when such a change is considered, JSU will follow the procedures outlined in the previous table as well as its own internal process based on the nature of the suggested change. Once approved by the JSU Board of Trustees, the President of the institution will notify the President of the Commission summarizing the proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the street address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site. When changes require prior approval, the President of the institution or his representative will seek input from the SACSCOC staff member assigned to JSU in order to determine the procedure to follow.

RESPONSIBILITY

This policy is the responsibility of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed at least every five (5) years.