



Policy Title	Substantive Change Policy
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Responsible Office	Office of the President
Contact Information	Office of Institutional Effectiveness Phone: 470-578-6976 Email: <a href="mailto:policy@kennesaw.edu">policy@kennesaw.edu</a>

### 1. Policy Purpose Statement

Kennesaw State University (KSU or the University) is responsible for complying with the policies of its regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (as noted in Section 7). Notification and reporting of any substantive change by an accredited institution are mandated by the U.S. Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 602.22.

### 2. Background

Change is essential for the continued success of KSU. "Substantive change" is defined as a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. To preserve our regional accreditation and its benefits, KSU must report in writing any actions defined as "substantive change" to the Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The SACSCOC Policy on Substantive Change provides information as to what types of substantive change are reportable and describes the reporting processes. At KSU, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness oversees the University's substantive change process and reporting.

### 3. Scope (Who is Affected)

Students, faculty, and staff are directly affected by substantive change decisions and actions because the University's accreditation status is associated with the University's compliance with this policy.

### 4. Exclusions or Exceptions

There are no exclusions or exceptions to this policy.

### 5. Definitions and Acronyms

See [Appendix A of this policy for SACSCOC Glossary of Terms.](#)

## 6. Policy

University decisions that may be considered a substantive change can be easily determined when discussed in advance of any major academic, business, or operational action. More important is the recognition that substantive change can occur at the program, departmental, or institutional level. Below are a few examples of what might constitute substantive change at KSU:

- changing the mission and objectives of the institution;
- initiating a merger or consolidation with another institution;
- establishing, relocating, or closing an off-campus instructional site;
- establishing a new campus;
- establishing a dual, joint, or cooperative degree program;
- initiating a direct assessment, competency-based educational program;
- significantly changing the length of a program;
- initiating distance learning that offers 25 percent or more of a program online;
- entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for federal financial aid (Title IV) funding offers 25 percent or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs;
- initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium.

KSU must notify SACSCOC in advance and within specified timeframes before taking action that involves a substantive change. Additionally, KSU must comply with policies of the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System of Georgia (USG) and procedures in the USG *Academic and Student Affairs Handbook*.

### Responsibilities

Administration and academic officers are responsible for being aware of the substantive change policy in order to inform the University's SACSCOC accreditation liaison (SAL) at the earliest point possible in the development of a proposal or plan that may constitute a substantive change for the University. The SAL is appointed by the president and is assigned to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Additionally, University officers must provide the SAL with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy as needed for policy compliance.

KSU's SAL is responsible for informing and updating administration and academic officers on SACSCOC substantive change requirements. The SAL is also responsible for:

- maintaining the University's policy on substantive change;
- keeping administration and academic officers up to date on the substantive change policy;
- providing an annual update on substantive change to the President's Cabinet;
- publishing University actions and procedures concerning substantive change on the liaison's office website;
- collaborating with and advising University officials to determine whether a proposed change is substantive and what action may be required when a change is substantive;
- file the appropriate notice, prospectus, or proposal with SACSCOC and coordinating with the Office of the Provost for communication with the BOR offices;

- coordinating with the SACSCOC or BOR staff and University officials on any required follow-up action.

## 7. Associated Policies/Regulations

- a. U.S. Department of Education, Accreditation in the United States, Part 602— Secretary’s Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, Required Operating Policies and Procedures, 602.22, Substantive Change.
- b. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), *Principles of Accreditation*, Comprehensive Standard 3.12, Substantive Change Procedure and Policy.
- c. SACSCOC policy statement, “Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions”.
- d. SACSCOC policy statement, “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures”.
- e. SACSCOC document “The Accreditation Liaison”.
- f. Board of Regents *Policy Manual*
  - 1) 3.3.3, Instructional Offered Externally.
  - 2) 9.3, Off-Campus Instructional Sites.
- g. University System of Georgia *Academic and Student Affairs Handbook*, Section 2.3 Academic Programs.

## 8. Procedures Associated with this Policy

The KSU SACSCOC accreditation liaison will provide procedural information to the office(s) involved in the substantive change to ensure compliance with the most current policies and procedures ([Appendix B](#)).

## 9. Forms Associated with this Policy

The KSU SAL will provide forms and instructions to the office(s) involved in the substantive change to ensure the use of the most current reporting documentation.

## 10. Violations

If an accredited institution fails to follow the SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it could be subject to special review and lose its federal financial aid (Title IV) funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse money received by the institution for programs related to an unreported substantive change. In addition, the institution’s case may be referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership.

## 11. Review Schedule

The Substantive Change Policy is reviewed annually by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

## Appendix A: SACSCOC Glossary of Terms

**Branch campus:** a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is permanent in nature; offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

**Contractual agreement:** typically is one in which an institution enters an agreement for receipt of courses/programs or portions of courses or programs (i.e., clinical training internships, etc.) delivered by another institution or service provider.

**Consortial relationship:** typically is one in which two or more institutions share in the responsibility of developing and delivering courses and programs that meet mutually agreed upon standards of academic quality.

**Direct assessment competency-based educational programs:** as defined by federal regulations, an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, uses direct assessment of student learning relying solely on the attainment of defined competencies or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others. The assessment must be consistent with the accreditation of the institution or program using the results of the assessment.

**Distance education:** a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

**Dual degree:** separate program completion credentials, each of which bears only the name, seal, and signature of the institution awarding the degree to the student.

**Educational program:** a coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (i.e., a degree, diploma, or certificate).

**Geographically separate:** an instructional site or branch campus that is located physically apart from the main campus of the institution.

**Joint degree:** a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the two or more institutions awarding the degree to the student.

**Significant departure:** a program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine whether a new program is a "significant departure," it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
- Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
- Will a significant number of new courses be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

**Unreported substantive change:** substantive changes approved or acted upon by an accredited institution without prior notification or prior approval from its regional accreditor that may be discovered by the institution or by the regional accreditor during or between periods of formal review.

## Appendix B: Substantive Change Procedures—Notification and Reporting

### Responsible Contacts:

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KSU SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison  
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Jackie Jones, Ed.D.  
Director of Institutional Quality and Accreditation  
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### Responsible Administrators:

- University President
- KSU SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison
- KSU Director of Institutional Quality and Accreditation
- Unit Heads

### Governing Policy:

1. U.S. Department of Education, Accreditation in the United States, Part 602—Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, Required Operating Policies and Procedures, 602.22, Substantive Change, [http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation\\_pg13.html](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg13.html)
2. Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy, <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>
3. SACSCOC "The Principles of Accreditation," Principle 3.12, <http://www.sacscoc.org/principles.asp>

Kennesaw State University (KSU) is responsible for complying with the policies of its regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Notification and reporting of any substantive change by an accredited institution are mandated by the U.S. Department of Education regulation 34 CFR 602.22 and is essential for continuation of accreditation status.

"Substantive change" is defined as a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. To preserve regional accreditation and its benefits, the University must comply with SACSCOC requirement that the University president and the University's SACSCOC accreditation liaison provide written notification in advance of initiating any substantive change

At KSU, each unit head is responsible for checking with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness if there is a change that may be considered substantive. The KSU SACSCOC accreditation liaison will review each situation and, if necessary, initiate action according to the current SACSCOC requirements and notify the University president.

## **Types of Substantive Change**

Because substantive change may occur at the University level, department level, and program level, it is imperative that the range of substantive changes be reviewed by leadership in the planning stages of a proposed change. Below are short descriptions of substantive changes per SACSCOC:

- any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution;
- any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution;
- a change from clock hours to credit hours;
- the establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program;
- the establishment of a branch campus;
- closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution;
- acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution;
- adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution;
- entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25 percent or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs;
- the addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated;
- the 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;
- a substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program;
- entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution.

## **Notification of the KSU SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison**

If a change is determined to be substantive, KSU must provide written notification to SACSCOC as much as 12 months in advance of implementing a change. Upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may fit one of the substantive changes described earlier, the KSU SACSCOC accreditation liaison (SAL) should be contacted immediately. No substantive change can be implemented without the appropriate SACSCOC notification and/or approval.

The KSU SACSCOC accreditation liaison will:

- schedule a meeting with the unit head to discuss the proposed change to determine if it requires notification to SACSCOC;
- work with the unit head to identify the required documentation based on the specific SACSCOC procedure of reporting and assist with the documentation;
- notify the University president of the proposed change and notification requirements;
- upon completion of the required documentation, submit it to the University president for approval and signature;

- ensure the timely submission of the substantive change package to the SACSCOC office;
- work with the unit head on any required follow-up requested by SACSCOC for additional documentation or clarification;
- assist with site visits conducted by SACSCOC with regard to substantive change;
- upon written notification of approval by SACSCOC, advise the unit head of the approval and any next steps;
- post all documentation associated with the notification and approval of the substantive change on the University website;
- ensure all substantive changes are noted in the University's reports to SACSCOC during an interim review, a reaffirmation of accreditation review, or as requested by SACSCOC.

### **Late Notification of Substantive Change**

If it is discovered that a unit has initiated or implemented a substantive change and not notified the KSU SAL, the unit head is responsible for notifying the KSU SAL immediately. The KSU SAL will follow the procedures shown above to ensure the notification steps are initiated to mitigate any issues related to late notification to SACSCOC. Upon discovery of an unreported substantive change, the KSU SAL will follow the procedures specified by SACSOCS policy. The most current procedures are available on the SACSCOC website, <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf> .

If an institution fails to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the institution's case may be referred to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership.