

Policy Number/Title:	2.1.24 Substantive Change Policy
Effective Since:	06/01/2023
Last Revision Approved:	06/01/2023
Responsible Office:	Academic Affairs

1. Scope:

This policy applies to all university officers who initiate, review, approve, and/or allocate resources to any substantive change. There are no exclusions or exceptions to this policy.

2. Definitions:

Definition of Substantive Change

The following definition is taken directly from the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures, which should be consulted for additional clarification, procedures, and timelines.

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 recognizes three types of substantive change, including institutional changes, program changes, and off-campus instructional site changes.

Under federal regulations, substantive change includes:

Institutional Changes:

- Any substantial change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- Any change in institutional governance
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution, including a branch campus
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution

Program Changes:

- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized

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- The addition of a program that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program
- Changing the way student progress is measured, whether in clock hours or credit hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- A substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- 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
- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement
- Entering into a written agreement 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 program is prohibited by federal regulations.

Off-campus Instructional Site Changes:

- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location, including a branch campus
- Closing an institution, program, method of delivery, off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site,
- 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.

3. Policy:

As a SACSCOC accredited institution, Winthrop University is required to comply with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy, including the establishment of institutional procedures to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely manner. If the institution fails to follow the SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding (student financial aid) 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 University's case may be referred to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction (warning, probation) or loss of accreditation.



As a South Carolina public institution, Winthrop University is required to meet the oversight regulations of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE), as directed by the General Assembly. The institution must receive approval for new or modified academic programs, regardless of the mode of delivery or location, from the CHE prior to implementation. The Commission also expects all academic programs to adhere to the standards set by SACSCOC and program-specific accrediting bodies.

Decisions that may be considered a substantive change should be discussed in advance of any major academic, business, or operational action. Substantive change can occur at the institution, division, college, department, or program level. Winthrop University must notify SACSCOC and CHE in advance and within specified timeframes before taking action that involves a substantive change. Reporting of substantive change allows these regulatory bodies to determine whether or not the change has affected the quality of the total institution and to assure the public that all aspects of the institution continue to meet defined standards.

4. Procedures:

Individuals in positions of leadership within divisions, colleges, departments, and programs of both academic and non-academic units are responsible for understanding the parameters of substantive change, as defined by both SACSCOC and CHE. It is the duty of administrative and academic officers to notify the Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs at the earliest point possible in the development of a plan that may constitute a substantive change. The Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs has established procedures that must be followed by all units to ensure timely notification to SACSCOC and CHE of all substantive changes. Implementation of any substantive change cannot occur until these regulatory bodies are notified and grant approval.

Upon discussion of the proposed change with the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs, the administrative or academic unit responsible for a substantive change will provide information, data, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC and CHE policy compliance requirements. All correspondence with SACSCOC and CHE will be submitted by the President or the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Responsibilities:

President: The President is ultimately responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted to SACSCOC and CHE, including substantive changes. The final reporting of substantive change is submitted under the President's signature.



Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs: The Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs is responsible for communicating with senior leadership regarding potential substantive change, including internal and external policies and procedures.

Vice Presidents: The Vice Presidents are responsible for their respective divisions bringing forward any potential substantive changes as outlined within this policy. They work with appropriate staff to draft and finalize compliance documents.

Academic Deans: The Academic Deans are responsible for their respective colleges bringing forward any potential substantive changes as outlined within this policy. They work with program directors to draft and finalize compliance documents.

Assistant Provost for Curriculum and Program Support: The Assistant Provost for Curriculum and Program Support is responsible for communicating with academic deans and program coordinators regarding possible substantive change and facilitating the completion of compliance documentation. Additionally, this individual serves as the CHE liaison.

Dean of the Graduate School: The Dean of the Graduate School is responsible for communicating with academic deans and graduate program coordinators regarding possible substantive change and facilitating the completion of compliance documentation.

SACSCOC Liaison: The SACSCOC liaison is responsible for monitoring substantive change progress and, in conjunction with the President, assure the accuracy of all information submitted to SACSCOC. This individual serves as the institution's sole designee for submission of all substantive change documentation to SACSCOC.

5. Resources:

1. Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement:

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

2. U. S. Department of Education 34 CFR Part 602 – The Secretary's Recognition of Accrediting Agencies:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/hea08/34cfr602.pdf> (see page 12)



3. Policies and Procedures for New Academic Programs, Program Modifications, Program Notifications, Program Terminations, and New Centers for SC Public Colleges and Universities:

https://www.che.sc.gov/CHE_Docs/academicaffairs/2018_06_07_Policies_and_Procedures_for_Academic_Programs.pdf

4. Proposals on New and Revised Degree Programs, Options, and Off-Site Offering of Existing Degrees

<https://apps.winthrop.edu/policyrepository/Policy/FullPolicy?PID=179>

6. History of Revisions:

06/01/2023	Minor Revisions
06/01/2021	Minor Revisions
04/15/2021	Policy first established

7. Approvals:

Responsible Officer Signature/Date:

Vice President/Senior Administrator Signature/Date:

President Signature/Date: