

Substantive Change Policy at The University of Southern Mississippi

October 2014

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Approved by Academic Council 3/7/16

Approved by Graduate Council 3/18/16

1. Background

The University of Southern Mississippi is required to be in compliance with the Substantive Change Policy of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), as outlined in the SACSCOC Policy document

(<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>).

That document stipulates that “Member institutions are required to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion.”

2. Definition of Substantive Change

SACSCOC defines a *substantive change* as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy document also contains a useful glossary defining important terms.

3. Core Aspects of the USM Substantive Change Policy

- 3.1. *Chairs and directors and their respective deans have the responsibility to be familiar with and to comply with university and SACSCOC policies on substantive changes and to provide the required information for compliance with those policies and with the policies of the Academic and Graduate Councils.*
- 3.2. *A basic requirement for all of the following is departments and colleges accurately code all courses in SOAR as to campus, course locations, and mode of delivery and accurately register course locations and program sites with the Office of Institutional Research.*
- 3.3. *Academic or Graduate Council approval or notification, as appropriate, is required for all substantive changes, with subsequent approval by the Provost and President. The “Who Approves What” chart in the Guidelines for Proposals for Academic and Graduate (chart is included in Appendix 2 here) indicates those council decisions that may require SACSCOC approval, as do proposal checklists posted at <https://info.usm.edu/group/849/page/proposals-guidelines>.*

4. Most Common Substantive Changes at USM and related procedures

The information below is referenced to the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy, which is the ultimate source document for specific information. The appendix also contains more detailed information.

- **Initiating an off-campus (additional) site (site-based/classroom group instruction)**
 - An offering department must inform Office of the Provost through the Office of Institutional Research of any course offered at any site other than the Hattiesburg campus, the Gulf Park campus, Stennis Space Center, the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, or Magnolia Speech School.
 - The *Proposal Guidelines* state, “The addition of any new course location beyond those listed [above] must receive prior approval of the Office of the Provost through the Office of Institutional Research before courses are offered.”
 - For courses offered at high schools, the offering department must inform the Office of Institutional Research as to which high school will serve as the course location.

- The semester before 25% of a program is offered at any additional site beyond those listed above (within a three-year period), the offering department must inform the Office of the Provost so that a letter of notification to SACSCOC can be prepared.
- Seven months before 50% of a program is offered at an additional site beyond those listed above (within a three-year period), the offering department must inform the Office of the Provost and submit a prospectus for submission to SACSCOC (see <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>).
- **Moving an approved off-campus instructional site within the same geographic area to serve essentially the same pool of students.**
 - An offering department must inform the Office of the Provost during the semester prior to the move.
 - Example: in 2009 the BSN program in Meridian was moved from the MSU site to a Meridian Community College site (across the street).
- **Adding a program (approved for the institution) that is significantly different from previously reported programs offered through distance learning.**
 - Programs offered through distance learning (in a format other than face-to-face) must be approved by the Academic or Graduate Council for recommendation to the Provost the semester prior to initial delivery. “Significantly different” programs require notification to SACSCOC prior to implementation.
- **Initiating a certificate program that does not draw on existing courses or programs.**
 - Academic or Graduate Council must approve all new certificate programs.
 - A certificate that is also significant departure from previously approved programs must be approved by SACSCOC—the same as any other new program.
 - To offer such a certificate at a new site requires approval of the site.
- **Initiating a program/courses delivered through contractual agreement or a consortium.** Clinical agreements such as for internships and articulation agreements among institutions that are members of SACSCOC need not be reported.
 - The participating department must receive the approval of the Office of the Provost and the Academic or Graduate Council, as appropriate, for any such agreement in the semester prior to implementation.
- **The closing of a program, instructional site or branch campus** requires Procedure 3, which entails the submission of a *Teach-Out Plan* in advance of implementation. A teach-out plan must include the following information:
 1. Date of closure
 2. An explanation of how affected parties (students, faculty, staff) will be informed of the impending closure
 3. An explanation of how students will be helped to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption or additional expense
 4. Signed copies of teach-out agreements with other institutions, if any
 5. How faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employmentThe home department or college for any program discontinuation must submit a teach-out plan to the Office of the Provost and to the Academic or Graduate Council as soon as the decision to close is made.

5. Questions, Resources, and Procedures

All questions concerning the USM Substantive Change Policy should be directed to the Office of the Provost. The USM Office of Institutional Effectiveness maintains a library of SACSCOC-related resources. Substantive changes, as approved by university bodies, are submitted to SACSCOC through the Office of the Provost and, if appropriate, the Office of the President.

APPENDIX 1 SACSCOC SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

The SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy outlines three procedures in addressing different types of modifications.

- Procedure 1, requiring notification, submission of an application or prospectus to SACS, and approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees
- Procedure 2, requiring notification to the president of SACSCOC prior to implementation
- Procedure 3, requiring the submission of a *Teach-out Plan* in advance of implementation of closing of a program, instructional site or branch campus

The following charts are based on the [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy](#)

Those changes most pertinent to USM are highlighted in bold:

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	1	NA	NA	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: April 8 or September 15
Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a branch campus (See definition of "branch campus" on p. 3 of this document.)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice					
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	NA	NA	Yes	Modified prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
Initiating other certificate programs					
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	NA	NA	Yes	Contact Commission Staff (Also see page 16, item 9)

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Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Adding a combination degree program that reduces the hours needed to complete the combined degrees (e.g., combination baccalaureate and master's degree)	1	NA	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Provide details on both programs of study and justify any deviation from Core Requirement 2.7.1 or its Interpretation .
Initiating distance learning...					
Offering 50% or more of a program <u>for the first time [USM has already met this requirement]</u>	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...Offering 25-49%	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Offering 24% or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	N A
Initiating or terminating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement
Entering into or terminating a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs					
...if the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
...if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of the signed agreement
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution See SACSCOC policy " Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status "	See SACSCOC policy	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 8 or September 15

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Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution See SACSCOC policy " Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status "	See SACSCOC policy	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 8 or September 15
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification with new address and starting date
Initiating degree completion programs	1	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution					
...Institution to teach out its own students	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
...Institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement detailing terms included with notification
Acquiring any program or site from another institution See SACSCOC policy " Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status "	See SACSCOC policy	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing See SACSCOC policy " Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status "	See SACSCOC policy	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

APPENDIX 2

USM Who Approves What Chart

WHO APPROVES WHAT CHART						
	DC/CC	REG	AC/GC*	PROV#	PRES	IHL
Course Addition/Deletion/Inactivation	X	❖	X	#		
Course Modifications						
CIP Code	X	❖	X	#		
Course Description****	X	❖	X	#		
Course Title	X	❖	X	#		
Credit Hours	X	❖	X	#		
Grading Method	X	❖	X	#		
General Education Curriculum Course Modifications	X	❖	X	#		
Method of Instruction	X	❖	X	#		
Title Abbreviation	X	❖	X	#		
Addition, Deletion, Inactivation, Modification, Relocation, or Expansion of an Academic Minor or Emphasis Area [SACSCOC notification or approval may be necessary]	X	❖	X	X		
Modification, Relocation, or Expansion of a Certificate	X	❖	X	X		
Addition, Deletion, or Inactivation of a Certificate [SACSCOC notification or approval may be necessary]	X	❖	X	X		X**
Program Modification (Degree Plan/Plan of Study change, GPA requirements, admission restrictions as needed)	X	❖	X	X		
Offering an existing degree program by distance learning	X	❖	X	X	X	X**
Changing the CIP code of an existing degree program	X	❖	X	X		X**
New degree program [SACSCOC notification or approval may be necessary]	X	❖	X	X	X	X***
Modification to existing degree program (renaming, consolidation, suspension, inactivation, deletion, relocation, or expansion) [SACSCOC notification or approval may be necessary]	X	❖	X	X	X	X***
Modification to existing academic units (renaming, reorganization, deletion)	X	❖	X	X	X	X***
Offering a program or courses at any location beyond those listed here: Hattiesburg, Gulf Park, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Magnolia Speech School, Stennis Space Center. [SACSCOC notification or approval may be necessary]	X	❖	X	X		
Establishing or Terminating a Collaborative, Dual, Joint, or Articulation Agreement/Partnership with an outside Institution [SACSCOC notification or approval may be necessary]	X	❖	X	X		
New or Modified Academic Policies	If applicable	❖	X	X		
New Academic Unit (for information and response)	X	❖	X	X	X	X***

DC/CC=department and college councils; REG=Registrar; AC/GC=Academic and/or Graduate Council; PROV=Provost; PRES=President; IHL= Institutions of Higher Learning

❖ The Registrar reviews all proposals.

* The Professional Education Council must also approve proposals involving the university's professional education unit.

** IHL notification required. All IHL proposals require submission of an IHL form.

*** IHL approval required. All IHL proposals require submission of an IHL form.

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- **** Modification of course descriptions that are limited to adding or deleting pre-requisite or co-requisite from within a college require approval at the college level only. They need not be approved by the Councils. College approval should be forwarded to the Councils in order to assure consistency and accuracy in the Bulletins and in SOAR. Modification of course descriptions that include class standing, degree GPA, ACT score and other university level criteria will be reviewed by the Councils. Submitting departments should include proposed changes in the Course Description section of the "Modify a Course" form. Modifications approved by the Councils will be forwarded to the Registrar for implementation. Colleges approving intra-college modifications should forward their paperwork to the Councils. The Chair of the Councils will announce these modifications in their Chair report. Council will forward paperwork to the Registrar. Modifications to course descriptions are implemented in each fall semester when they are published in the University Bulletin. Mid-year changes cannot be accommodated.
- # The Provost receives a report on all actions taken by the Academic and Graduate Councils. (See [Faculty Handbook](#) – See Section 2.11.5 and Section 2.11.6)