



## Substantive Change Policy for Institutional Accreditation

### The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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#### Purpose

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The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill) is obligated to comply with the substantive change requirements of the U.S. Department of Education (34 C.F.R. § 602.22). Substantive change refers to any “significant modification of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), the University’s regional accreditor, oversees institutional compliance with this regulation. SACSCOC’s Substantive Change Policy (<http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>) also addresses program-level changes that require institutions to notify SACSCOC in a timely manner and under some conditions, to obtain approval prior to implementation.

The purpose of this policy is to outline mandatory procedures for ensuring that program and institution-level changes covered by the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy are properly identified, documented, and reported by UNC-Chapel Hill.

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#### Definitions

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**Substantive Change:** A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes revisions to the mission, legal status, or control of the institution; the addition of courses or programs that are significant departures from current offerings; establishment of off-campus instructional sites; program closures; collaborative academic or contractual arrangements with other institutions or entities; and related actions. SACSCOC specifies additional types of substantive changes that must also be reported and/or approved before implementation.

**Significant Departure:** A program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or off-campus site in terms of content or mode of delivery proposed.

**SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison:** The individual designated by the Chancellor to serve as the University’s representative to SACSCOC and to coordinate communications concerning substantive change and other accreditation requirements.

**Request for Substantive Change Review:** A request submitted to the Accreditation Liaison by a dean or designee to determine if a proposed program action would be considered a substantive change under current SACSCOC policy and to confirm the requirements for ensuring compliance.



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## Audience

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This policy applies to all academic schools and departments in the University.

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## Compliance

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Failure to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures may result in adverse accreditation actions for the institution, such as sanctions, loss of Title IV funding, or being required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change.

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## Policy and Procedures

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All proposed changes related to academic for-credit programs must be forwarded to the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison for review to determine whether they fall into any of the categories for which SACSCOC requires prior notification or approval. The request must include a brief description of the proposed action, the expected implementation date, and any proposals or other documents prepared as part of the University's internal program approval process. The Accreditation Liaison will review the proposed change in relation to current SACSCOC policies, provide advice concerning requirements and dates by which a notification or prospectus must be submitted, and work with program faculty to prepare the documentation and letter of transmittal for the Chancellor's signature.

This policy, current SACSCOC policy, instructions, and contact information for the Accreditation Liaison will be provided on the policy website of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (<http://provost.unc.edu/policies/>) and the Accreditation website of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (<http://oira.unc.edu/accreditation/>). To ensure that SACSCOC reporting deadlines are met, questions and requests for review should be directed to the Accreditation Liaison as early as possible in the planning process.

The current SACSCOC policy on Substantive Change and listing of changes that must be reported or approved is available at: <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>.

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## Roles and Responsibilities

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**Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost:** Inform deans of substantive change policies; maintain on its policy website the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy, UNC-Chapel Hill policies and procedures for compliance, and instructions for submitting a substantive change review to the Accreditation Liaison.

**SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison:** Maintain current information on SACSCOC Substantive Change policies; communicate and interpret those policies to the campus; confer with



SACSCOC staff to confirm application of policies to specific situations; and prepare documents, notifications, and requests for SACSCOC approval for the Chancellor's signature.

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### Related Regulations, Statutes, and Policies

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U.S. Department of Education Regulations Concerning Substantive Change (34 C.F.R. § 602.22.):

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

SACSCOCs Substantive Change Policy Statement (subject to change without notice) <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

UNC-Chapel Hill Substantive Change Policy and Instructions, located on the website of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost: <http://provost.unc.edu/policies/> and the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment Accreditation webpage: <http://oira.unc.edu/accreditation/>

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### Contacts

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SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison for UNC-Chapel Hill:

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### Document History

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- Initial Approval: December 10, 2013
- Subject to change without notice in response to U.S. Department of Education and/or SACSCOC policy revisions.
- Reviewed and revised July 1, 2016