

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON  
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

ACADEMIC PROGRAM AND SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE NOTIFICATION

BACKGROUND:

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution. SACS COC, in accordance with federal guidelines, requires reporting of substantive change. These changes can be varied but may include modifications such as:

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- 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 change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- 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
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree program or a joint degree program with another 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% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs

However, not all changes in programs constitute a substantive change; e.g. offering courses on-line that amount to < 25% of the coursework needed to complete a degree or the addition of a program that is at the same level and not significantly different from existing programs. Many substantive changes require advance notification (4-6 months) in the form of a notification letter or, in certain specific cases, a substantive change prospectus. If an institution fails to notify SACS COC of a substantive change, they can be found in non-compliance with accreditation requirements. As such, it is essential that an institution has processes in place to insure substantive changes are identified and reported as appropriate.

PROCEDURE:

At UNCW, Academic Affairs must be notified of all program changes (additions, deletions, and alterations) after appropriate faculty approval. Academic Affairs will review program changes and refer any program change proposals that may meet substantive change reporting requirements to the University Accreditation Coordinator for review. If the University Accreditation Coordinator finds that a substantive change notification is warranted, the University Accreditation Coordinator will draft the

appropriate notification after final program change approval (which may be from UNC General Administration in some cases) and ensure that the notification is submitted by the appropriate deadline. In most cases, these notifications will be sent to SACS from the Chancellor's office.

REFERENCE:

[SACS COC "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges: Policy Statement.](#)

Approved by Academic Coordinating Council, November 8, 2010.