

UIW Policy for Substantive Changes to Accredited Activities

*Policy for Notifying and Reporting Substantive Change
to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)*

I. POLICY STATEMENT -- Comply with SACSCOC Requirement

This UIW Policy establishes procedures to ensure timely, accurate and complete notification to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) whenever UIW proposes a significant change to the nature or scope of activities that were accredited during the most recent SACSCOC evaluation.

II. PURPOSE – We Care About Quality

These procedures aim to ensure continuous compliance with SACSCOC standards for requesting and reporting Substantive Changes. UIW intends to maintain the highest standards of SACSCOC membership, where regular peer review contributes to high quality programs for our students. Increased oversight by the U.S. Department of Education also ties regional accreditation to our ability to participate in Title IV financial aid programs which enable university access for the students our mission calls us to serve.

This policy highlights that most proposals for Substantive Changes require SACSCOC approval *before* we implement those changes (see References below).

III. EFFECTIVE DATE

Originally approved by the UIW President’s Executive Council: 28 June 2012
Approved by Faculty Senate: 14 August 2012; May 2024.

IV. SCOPE – Everything Related to Academic Program Delivery

This policy applies to all changes in UIW academic programs and facilities – whether domestic or international – that fall under the scope of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy (see References below). All individuals that contribute to proposals or implementation of Substantive Changes are responsible for complying with this policy and for coordinating these changes with their respective senior administrator and the UIW SACS Liaison.

Most UIW proposals for Substantive Change will be ultimately reviewed by a common group of offices and committees; this policy identifies steps within the existing approval processes of these units to ensure the timely request and reporting of such proposals to SACSCOC when required. These groups include:

UIW President	UIW Board of Trustees
Vice Presidents	University Strategic Priority Chairs
Deans	Faculty Leadership
Program Directors	Curriculum Committees Members
Site Directors / Rectors	Registrar
Associate Vice President for Capital Planning & Campus Management	Comptroller’s Office

UIW compliance is mandatory. Each individual and office noted here is required to be familiar with and follow this policy.

V. **POLICY MANAGEMENT**

Responsible Executive	President
Responsible Office	Vice President Academic Affairs & Provost
Responsible Officer	SACSCOC Liaison

VI. **HELPFUL DEFINITIONS** – From SACSCOC Publications

SACSCOC defines a **Substantive Change** as “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.”

***** Most Substantive Changes require UIW to notify SACSCOC before implementation. Many Substantive Changes also require UIW to get SACSCOC approval, before implementation. *****

Substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit

- credential).
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
 - Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
 - Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
 - Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
 - Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
 - Entering into a written arrangement 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 programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
 - Substantially increase or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.
 - 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.
 - Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
 - Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
 - 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.
 - Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.
 - Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

The initiation of new off-campus sites, and the addition of new programs that represent significant departures from current offerings, are commonly reported Substantive Changes.

Other substantive change requirements, including those required by federal regulations, include:

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

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. (Source: SACSCOC)

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 other digital media if used as part of the distance education course or program. (Source: SACSCOC)

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.

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.

Level: SACSCOC's level taxonomy categorizes institutions by the highest degree offered. As a university that offers four or more distinct doctorate degrees, UIW is designated as a Level VI institution.

Off Campus Site: Campus location providing educational course and/or program offerings that is at a different address than the main campus location.
(Source: SACSCOC)

VII. **PROCEDURES** – Contact the UIW Liaison Early, for Help and for Reporting

Substantive change prospectus, application, and notification submission deadlines depend on (1) the type of SACSCOC Board of Trustees review, if required (see also the Board review pathways explained below), and (2) the intended implementation date of the substantive change.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees (which meets biannually), to be implemented after the date of the SACSCOC Board meeting, the submission deadlines are:

- March 15 for review at the SACSCOC Board’s biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year, and
- September 1 for review at the SACSCOC Board’s biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the SACSCOC Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (which meets year round), the submission deadlines are

- January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year, and
- July 1 for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

IF YOU HAVE A NEW PROPOSAL: At the earliest stage of preliminary planning,

notice of any change that could be deemed substantive must be submitted in writing to the appropriate UIW vice president and to the UIW SACSCOC Liaison.

The notice should include:

- (a) the title of the proposed change;
- (b) a brief description of the change, including its nature (e.g., new educational program, new off-campus site, initiation of distance education) and its scope (one program, multiple programs in one college/school, etc.);
- (c) contact information for the responsible individual;
- (d) a tentative timeline for approval, including steps in the approval process (e.g., school and university curriculum committees, Faculty Senate, Provost, President, Board of Trustees, external boards or associations, etc.); and
- (e) the earliest possible date for implementation.

The UIW Liaison will determine whether the proposal is reportable according to the latest SACSCOC standard. The Liaison will consult, as needed, the latest SACSCOC guidance, the UIW Institutional Effectiveness Council, and the appointed SACSCOC vice president. The Liaison will report these determinations regularly to the UIW Institutional Effectiveness Council.

The UIW Liaison will lead the preparation of reports to SACSCOC. The Liaison will coordinate accurate and complete input from all responsible offices.

Please see the References below for details of the procedures and required time frames for seeking prior approval from SACSCOC for various Substantive Changes.

ON A REGULAR BASIS: To ensure all UIW offices remain alert to the potential for new proposals to be reportable under this policy:

- (a) The Liaison will participate in regular meetings of the academic Dean's councils and will chair the UIW Institutional Effectiveness Council;
- (b) The Liaison or Provost will provide an annual report to the UIW Executive Council and the UIW Board of Trustees;
- (c) The Liaison will meet annually with the UIW vice presidents;
- (d) The Liaison will review regular minutes from the UIW Board of Trustees and all UIW curriculum councils;
- (e) All UIW curriculum councils, and the UIW Registrar, will institute a review step to identify the potential for a new curriculum proposal to constitute a Substantive Change;
- (f) The Provost will share with the Liaison all changes in the status of program-specific accreditations, to determine which are reportable according to SACSCOC and U.S. Department of Education guidance.

UIW's Liaison will send initial written notification of this policy to all responsible UIW officers and faculty and will send thereafter annual written reminders regarding their responsibility for compliance. The President, Provost, and Vice Presidents are responsible to ensure that their respective areas provide notice of any potential Substantive Changes under this policy.

The Provost and UIW SACSCOC Liaison will ensure that information regarding this policy is available on the UIW Policy Library webpage.

VIII. SANCTIONS – We Will Pause Activity if Needed

If UIW fails to follow SACSCOC procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, our accreditation may be placed in jeopardy. For that reason, if an academic program, unit or officer initiates a Substantive Change without following the procedures outlined in this policy, the President or Provost may direct the immediate cancellation or cessation of that change, with due regard for the educational welfare of students. In areas outside of academic affairs, the same sanction may be applied by the President or relevant Vice President.

IX. EXCLUSIONS

No exclusions from this UIW policy will be permitted.

X. INTERPRETATION – Please Do Not Contact SACSCOC Directly

Please direct any questions about the interpretation of this policy to UIW's SACSCOC Liaison. If the question requires consultation with UIW's assigned SACSCOC vice president, then UIW's Liaison will make that further contact.

REFERENCES

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy

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

This policy contains the most current guidance on which changes need Commission approval before implementation, which require more simple notification, and the respective timelines required.

SACSCOC Frequently Asked Questions about Substantive Change

<https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/substantive-change-faqs/>

SACSCOC Advertising and Student Recruitment

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/07/advertising.pdf>

SACSCOC Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards

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

SACSCOC Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs

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

SACSCOC Distance and Correspondence Education

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/07/DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf>

SACSCOC Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change Of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status

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

TRACKING of UPDATES

Update 6 (Mar 2024)

- Section IV: Updates common groups of offices and committees
- Section V: Revise to eliminate specific names attached to offices
- Section VI: Update entire section to use current standards and definitions from SACSCOC policies
- Section VII: Update submission dates per SACSCOC policy
- Reference Section: Updated to current SACSCOC policies

Update 5 (Mar 2018)

- Updates UIW President to Dr. Evans.

Update 4 (Oct 2016)

- Updates usage of UIW Institutional Effectiveness Council. Updates Acting President, Dr. Doyle.
- Removes the embedded table drawn from the SACSCOC policy on Substantive Changes, and refers instead to a link to the publication for the most current information.

Update 3 (Feb 2014)

- Corrects language in Definitions, to note that *not* all Sub Changes need notices to SACSCOC.
- Updates titles of UIW Institutional Effectiveness Council.
- Reword more simply, from "...the University..." to "...UIW..."
- Updates Definitions to conform to the latest SACSCOC Sub Change policy.

Update 2 (Feb 2013)

- Updated the Types of Change table, using the new Feb 2013 version of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy. The new SACS policy reduces the number of changes that require prior notification, and streamlines the correspondence needed for Type I and Type II changes.

Update 1 (Aug 2012)

- Added "C" indexes for the Types of Change table.
- Added the review date for Faculty Senate, 14 August 2012.