

Important Changes to the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy

Effective January 1, 2021

Timeline for Notifications and Teach-Outs:

Required notifications must be submitted prior to implementation, but we do not have to wait to hear back from the Commission before we can move forward nor do we have to adhere to the Jan. 1/Jul. 1 deadlines set for substantive changes requiring approval (except for teach-outs). Teach-outs are to be submitted as soon as possible after the decision to close a program, site, or delivery method is made.

Changes that MUST be reported:

1. Change in method of program delivery
 - a. Methods: Face-to-Face; Distance Education (100% online or our definition of blended); Competency-based Education.
 - b. Adding a delivery method to an existing program **REQUIRES NOTIFICATION** prior to implementation.
 - c. **CHANGING** a delivery method (stopping one method and changing to another) requires the same notification **AND** a teach-out notification and teach-out plan for the delivery method being stopped.
 - d. Using Mercer definitions, if you have a program offered only F2F and you want to add a delivery method of blended (at least 50% online) or completely online, **NOTIFICATION is REQUIRED**.
 - e. But, if you have a program already offered as blended (either F2F and blended options or just blended) and you want to add a fully-online version, **NO** notification is required (SACS considers online and blended (our definition) synonymous.).
 - f. Or, if you have a program offered F2F and online and want to stop offering it completely F2F and have it available 100% online or blended (keeping some of your F2F courses but not enough to do more than 50% of the program), **NO** notification related to the distance ed piece, but **REQUIRED** teach-out plan and notification for closing the F2F version.
2. New program
 - a. **APPROVAL REQUIRED** if 50% of the program content is a significant departure from our existing programs. (Prospectus required)
 - b. Significant departure: **Content is new if it is not currently offered by the institution at the new program's instructional level.**
 - c. New program applies equally to a degree, major, certificate, or other credit-bearing credential.
 - d. A determination of the percentage of new content is made by the institution, not SACS, but we have to be able to document and justify our determination.
 - e. **NOTIFICATION REQUIRED** if 25-49% of program is new content.
3. Program closure
 - a. Program closure means:
 - i. Closing it completely, everywhere, by all delivery methods
 - ii. Closing it at one site, keeping it at others
 - iii. Closing a delivery method version of it
 - b. **APPROVAL REQUIRED** (of the teach-out plan, not the closure).

- c. Teach-out plan is required. It should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close.
- 4. Program length change
 - a. APPROVAL REQUIRED if program credit hours change by 25% or more (up or down) AND students' expected time to completion increases or decreases by more than one term.
- 5. Cooperative Academic Arrangement
 - a. Definition: an agreement with an entity to deliver program content recorded on the Mercer transcript as our own.
 - b. NOTIFICATION REQUIRED if 50% or more is offered through the arrangement OR if Mercer couldn't deliver the program without the arrangement
 - c. If neither is true and the agreement is with an entity qualified to participate in Title IV, NO NOTIFICATION REQUIRED.
 - d. If agreement is with a non-Title IV entity and 25-50% of the program is delivered by the other entity, APPROVAL REQUIRED.
 - e. If agreement is with a non-Title IV entity and less than 25% of a program is delivered by the other entity, NOTIFICATION REQUIRED.