

Memo to: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Loren J. Blanchard, President
Subject: Monitoring and Reporting of Substantive Changes

UH-Downtown/PS 03.A.32
Issue No. 3
Effective Date: 09/01/2022
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1. PURPOSE

As part of the requirements for regional accreditation, the University of Houston-Downtown is obligated to follow the substantive change procedures of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and to inform SACSCOC of any changes in its programs and activities in accordance with those procedures. This PS establishes guidelines to ensure that UHD remains in compliance with these requirements.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Academic administrator for SACSCOC compliance purposes: Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost; Associate Vice Presidents for Faculty, Research and Sponsored Programs, Programming and Curriculum, & Academic Affairs; Deans; Associate and Assistant Deans; Department Chairs; Assistant Department Chairs, Directors, and Program Coordinators
- 2.2. Distance education: [SACSCOC Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement](#) defines distance education as formal education process in which the 50% or more 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.”
- 2.3. Educational program: SACSCOC defines an educational program as a “coherent set of courses leading to a credential (degree, diploma, or certificate) awarded by the institution.” ([SACSCOC Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#), pg. 167.)
- 2.4. Joint and dual academic awards: Agreements between institutions accredited by SACSCOC and accredited or non-accredited degree-granting institutions of higher education throughout the world for purposes of awarding academic completion awards (certificates, diplomas or degrees.) [SACSCOC Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards Policy and Procedures.](#)
- 2.5. Notification: A letter from an institution’s chief executive officer, or their designated representative, to the SACSCOC President summarizing a proposed change,

providing the intended implementation date, and listing the complete physical address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site or branch campus. Depending on the type of change, SACSCOC may require notification or a full substantive change prospectus. Changes requiring notification only may be submitted at any time prior to implementation.

- 2.6. Off-campus instructional site: [SACSCOC Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement](#) defines off-campus instructional site as “a location geographically apart from an institution’s sole main campus, where instruction is delivered.”
- 2.7. Percentage of program instruction: the percentage of the *total instruction* required to earn a credential measured in credit hours, clock hours, competencies, or other generally accepted measure of progress to completion.
- 2.8. Program: A for-credit credential for which an institution awards a degree, diploma, certificate, or other credential at any level of instruction (graduate or undergraduate).
- 2.9. SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison: The person, appointed by the President, who serves as the primary and official intermediary between the university and SACSCOC.
- 2.10. Substantive change: As defined by the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures, “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” See the [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#) policy for specific due dates for substantive changes prospectuses. Examples include but are not limited to the following: substantial changes to the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs, offering programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized, adding a new program, closing a program, changing the method of delivery of an existing program, or establishing a new program location.
- 2.11. Substantive change prospectus: A written report used to convey details of a programmatic or institutional substantive change to SACSCOC using a template found in the [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#). Depending on the scope and type of change, SACSCOC may require notification or a full substantive change prospectus.
- 2.12. Teach-out Plan: A written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution or an institutional location that provides 50% or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study. This applies to the closure of a branch campus, an off-site location, or a program. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of the intended implementation date. Teach-out plans are reported using templates found in the [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#) and address how the institution will communicate the plan to students and other stakeholders, how students will access academic records, how student accounts

receivables and refunds will be addressed, how staff and faculty will be re-employed and other program-specific information such as timelines and degree completion options.

3. POLICY

3.1 All academic administrators whose responsibilities may involve them in actions that could constitute substantive changes will:

3.1.1 Maintain current understanding of this policy and the SACSCOC substantive change policy. They will especially be knowledgeable about the types of actions that constitute substantive changes, the procedures required for each type, and the reporting time frames for each type.

3.1.2 Notify the Associate Vice President for Programming and Curriculum (AVPPC), the SACSCOC Liaison, and other appropriate administrators of changes requiring possible substantive change reporting well before the intended implementation date.

3.1.3 Ensure that adequate courses are offered so that a full-time student enrolled in a master's or undergraduate degree completion program that is promoted as a credential that can be completed fully online or at an off-site locate, can be completed in two years in the designated modality. Programs that cannot meet this requirement must either be modified or close out that modality by implementing a teach-out plan designed to allow students already enrolled to finish in the designated modality.

3.2 Changes requiring notification only may be implemented any time after notification has been submitted to SACSCOC. Changes requiring a substantive change prospectus cannot be implemented until formal approval is received from SACSCOC.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 The AVPPC will:

4.1.1. Notify deans and chairs of requirements outlined in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedure and this policy each long semester;

4.1.2 Ensure that all master's and undergraduate degree completion programs that are promoted as credentials that can be completed fully online or at an off-site location, maintain a rotating schedule of courses as required in 4.2.1 and maintain a current archive of those schedules;

i. Assist programs that have not offered the designated courses as required in 4.2.1 to either implement a plan to return to the agreed-upon rotating course schedule or close out the modality or location; and

- ii. Assist the SACSCOC Liaison in preparing and submitting to SACSCOC any letter of notification, prospectus, application, teach-out plan, or other materials that are required for compliance with the SACSCOC substantive change policy.

4.2 Deans and chairs will:

- 4.2.2 Consult with the SACSCOC liaison and AVPPC prior to implementing any changes in degree program methods of delivery (e.g. adding or removing the ability to complete a degree online) to determine reporting requirements and comply with any curricular policy requirements.
- 4.2.3 Assist the SACSCOC Liaison and the AVPPC in preparing and submitting to SACSCOC any letter of notification, prospectus, application, teach-out plan, or other materials that are required for compliance with the SACSCOC substantive change policy.

4.3 The SACSCOC Liaison will:

- 4.3.1 Review this policy annually to ensure it remains in compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedure.
- 4.3.2 Provide academic administrators with information about the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedure. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining a section of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness website concerning substantive change and sending information about substantive change to academic administrators at least annually;
- 4.3.3 Work with academic administrators to determine whether actions or proposed actions constitute substantive changes;
- 4.3.4 Determine what interaction with SACSCOC is needed when a change is substantive;
- 4.3.5 Coordinate the preparation and submission to SACSCOC of any letter of notification, prospectus, application, teach-out plan or other materials that are required for compliance;
- 4.3.6 Coordinate any follow-up actions that may be required in order to remain in compliance.
- 4.3.7 Maintain a centrally located archive of all SACSCOC substantive change documents and related SACSCOC correspondence.

5. EXHIBITS

There are no exhibits associated with this policy.

6. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Review: Every three years on or before August 1

President

7. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 09/28/2010

Issue #2: 08/15/2016

8. REFERENCES

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)

[SACSCOC Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement](#)

[UHD Substantive Change Compliance Form](#)

[SACSCOC Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards Policy and Procedures.](#)