Reporting Substantive Changes to SACSCOC

Issued:

Responsible Official: SACSCOC Liaison

Responsible Office: Office of Planning & Assessment

Policy Statement

It is the policy of Lamar University to adhere to accreditation standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges ("SACSCOC" or "Commission").

01. PURPOSE

01.01

Lamar University is dedicated to the expansion of academic opportunities through the development and offering of new programs and courses offered off-site or by electronic means, in support of the University's mission.

01.02

Lamar is also committed to adhering to the policies and requirements of its regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). In accordance with such policy, Lamar will notify SACSCOC of potential or actual substantive change to its role and scope in a timely manner, and in some cases, will seek approval for change before the initiative is implemented.

01.03

SACSCOC is recognized by the United States Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its members to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.

01.04

SACSCOC is responsible for reviewing all substantive changes that occur between an institution's decennial reviews to determine whether or not the change has affected the quality of the total institution and to assure the public that all aspects of the institution continue to meet defined standards. Therefore, Lamar is also committed to establishing procedures to ensure compliance and to providing guidance and expectations regarding those curricular and organizational changes requiring notification and approval.

01.05

The purpose of this policy is to comply with the substantive change requirements of SACSCOC. This policy is applicable to all departments and colleges.

02. DEFINITIONS

02.01

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution.

02.02

There are three different types of substantive change:

(1) substantive change requiring notification and approval prior to implementation;

(2) substantive change requiring only notification prior to implementation; and

(3) review and approval of teach-out plans when closing a program, site, branch campus, or institution.

02.03

Examples of substantive change and the procedures used in meeting notification and approval requirements include but are not limited to:

a.   initiating courses or programs that represent a significant departure from those currently approved,

b.   significantly (25% or more) modifying course offerings in an existing degree program,

c.   offering part or all of a program or courses through contractual agreements or consortium,

d.   commencing or expanding off-campus sites or distance education programs,

e.   initiating a degree completion program,

f.   expanding programs at the current credential level,

g.   initiating courses or programs at a different credential level,

h.   substantially altering the number of clock or credit hours for successful completion of a program,

i.   changing from clock hours to credit hours,

j.   significantly changing the length of a program,

k.   closing a program,

l.   relocating an off-campus site, main campus or a center,

m.   establishing an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of a program,

n.   significantly altering the mission of the institution,

o.   changing governance, ownership, control or legal status,

p.   changing the established mission of the institution.

02.04

Certain substantive changes require prior notification to SACSCOC. Other substantive changes require submission of a substantive change prospectus or a modified prospectus prior to the implementation of the substantive change. Many substantive changes require on-site committee reviews by SACSCOC. In consultation with the SACSCOC policies and staff, the University's Accreditation Liaison determines the applicability of *SACSCOC Substantive Change* policy to the above described activities.

03. ROLES

03.01

Role of President – The chief executive officer of Lamar notifies the president of SACSCOC of substantive changes at the institution.

03.02

Role of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs – Substantive changes are typically the result of activities in the Division of Academic Affairs, for which the provost and vice president for Academic Affairs has oversight. All curriculum proposals must be submitted to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs for approval and reporting, and when necessary, to SACSCOC. *The VPAA maintains the online curriculum tracking site and also pays any fees related to the substantive change.*

03.03

Role of Accreditation Liaison – The Executive Director of the Office of Planning & Assessment serves as Lamar's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, whose charge is to ensure compliance

with accreditation requirements. The accreditation liaison adheres to the prescribed procedures and timeframe and provides appropriate documentation regarding substantive changes to SACSCOC. *The accreditation liaison reviews all curriculum changes before they are submitted to the University Undergraduate Curriculum Council or the Graduate Council.* The accreditation liaison is familiar with SACSCOC's policies and procedures and consults with the institution's SACSCOC staff member about any questions. The Accreditation Liaison will sign off on the *Course Inventory Update Form*.

03.04

Role of Faculty and Academic Administrators – In order to ensure compliance, all faculty and administrators involved in making a curricular or organizational change should review this policy as well as other policies pursuant to the specific type of change (e.g., requesting new academic program, adding new courses, or adding online courses to an existing program). Faculty and administrators involved in making a curricular or organizational change are responsible for drafting appropriate notifications and other required documents (i.e., prospectus) following the [Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accreditation Institutions Policy](#).

03.05

Role of the Dean of Library Services – In order to ensure compliance with SACSCOC standards faculty and administrators are responsible for requesting a review of library resources to ensure the "access to appropriate collections, services, and other library-related resources that support all educational, research, and public service programs wherever they are offered and at the appropriate degree level." The Dean of Library Services will ensure that this review is completed and sign off on the *Course Inventory Update Form*.

04. MONITORING AND REPORTING CHANGES

04.01

The University has developed procedures for departments and units to follow when developing and delivering College courses off-site, electronically, revising a program, proposing a new program or program level change, program closures and contracts or consortium agreements for instruction.

04.02

The University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will be consulted prior to beginning a process that results in a substantive change. Prior to developing and delivering University courses off-site, electronically, for a new program and or program level, or significantly altering an existing degree plan please consult these procedures and fill out the **Substantive Change Checklist for Notification and/or Approval** and submit it to the SACSCOC Liaison when before the program is submitted to the University Undergraduate Curriculum Council or the Graduate Council.

04.03

Depending on the specific nature of the change, all changes must be reported to SACSCOC for notification and approval in a timely manner. All submissions will be coordinated through the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison. Any unit or department initiating a substantive change must notify the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison as soon as the change is considered.

04.04

All questions about whether a change is substantive should be directed to the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison for guidance.

04.05

All correspondence with SACSCOC will be submitted by the University President or the University's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison.

Checklist for Notification and/or Approval of Substantive Change

Step 1: Submit Notification of Changes to SACSCOC – six (6) months prior to implementation (at least). The department/unit initiating the change must draft a written "Notification Letter" detailing the change. The University President signs the letter. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will support this process.

Elements of a Notification Letter include:

Approximately 1-2 pages depending on the nature of the change and in language understandable to an outside reader

General statement of proposal (program, where, when)

Degree (including how long in existence on the main campus)

Location of site

With Whom: Institution/University/Corporation

When – When courses are scheduled to begin, length of degree

Who - Targeted group, needs

How it fits into University, school, department's mission, vision, goals, and especially University academic themes

Teaching Methodology: Face-to-face, Internet, video

Percentage of curriculum - Classroom, internships, trips, guest speakers, etc., instructional language

Student Enrollment: Numbers, cohorts or on-going

Differences in admission and/or graduation requirements

Faculty Qualifications – Roster for each individual teaching at site; must meet SACS standards

Financial Resources

Physical Resources

Learning resources - Libraries, computers, computer networks

Support Services – E.g., Admission, registration, advising, orientation

Program Quality - Ways to monitor and ensure quality of courses, instruction and program as a whole: evaluation methods, instruments, who is responsible for implementation, how results will be used to make improvements

Additional documentation that may be required includes course names and learning outcomes and faculty qualifications and teaching assignments for the proposed program indicated on the SACSCOC **Faculty Roster Form**.

Step 2: Submit Substantive Change Prospectus – 6 months prior to implementation

If the proposed change includes offering 50% or more of students' credits toward a degree, it is advisable to submit the prospectus with the notification letter

Deadlines vary for each type of substantive change. Check Substantive Change Policy for deadlines. Prospectus deadlines are **January 1** (Fall Start) and **June 1** (Spring start)

SACSCOC requires use of their **[Substantive Change Prospectus Template (Appendix B)](#)**

The SACSCOC Liaison provides support and background information for this process

Step 3: SACSCOC Response – A number of responses from SACSCOC are possible

Accept notification letter and require no additional information

Accept notification letter and require additional information (modified prospectus)

Accept notification letter and require a Substantive Change Prospectus (template)

Accept Substantive Change Prospectus and require no additional information

Accept Substantive Change Prospectus and require Substantive Change Visit

Late Notification of SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison

If an existing program may constitute a substantive change without notification of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, the appropriate School Dean, Department Chair, or Program Coordinator has responsibility to notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison immediately. It is then the responsibility of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to notify SACSCOC as provided in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy. When reviewing all program proposals, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, School Deans, Department Chairs, and other University administrators should consider the substantive change policy.

Appendix A

CHECKLIST FOR PROPOSALS INVOLVING A SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

	This change…	Yes	No
1.	Involves the proposal of coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved		
2.	Expands current degree level (significant departure from current programs/no closely related counterpart exists among previously approved programs in the curriculum)		
3.	Requires new faculty		
4.	Involves courses of which at least 25% are new		
5.	Requires new library or other learning resources		
6.	Initiates a new branch campus		
7.	Involves coursework at foreign sites		
8.	Initiates off-campus sites where Students can obtain 50% or more credits toward program		
9.	Initiates off-campus sites where Students can obtain 25-49% or more credits toward program		
10	Initiates or expands distance learning 50% or more course credits obtained through distance learning		
11.	Initiates or expands distance learning 25-49% of course credits obtained through distance learning		
12.	Involves a contractual agreement or consortium		
13.	Changes the number of credit hours required for successful program completion		
14.	Involves a change in governance, ownership/control or legal status		
15.	Involves a merger with another program		
16.	Significantly alters the length of a program		
17.	Involves closing a program		

Proposed Program: _____

School(s): _____

Point-of-Contact: _____

Date_____

Appendix B:

Required Components for a Substantive Change Full or Modified Prospectus

Packet is submitted through the SACSCOC Liaison in the Office of Planning & Assessment

Each submission must include the following in the order listed:

1. Transmittal letter signed by an institutional representative (President) which briefly explains the submission

2. "Cover Sheet for Submission of Substantive Changes Requiring Approval" form

3. Name, telephone number, and email address of the person who may be contacted concerning questions about the prospectus. (SACSCOC Liaison)

4. A list of degrees and majors which the institution is authorized to grant (photocopy from the catalog is acceptable)

5. A list of existing approved off-campus sites and their addresses. Note: an approved site is one for which a prospectus has been submitted and which SACSCOC has approved to offer 50% or more of a program. A site where 25-49% of a program is offered is not considered to be an "approved" site; it is a site for which only notification has been accepted by SACSCOC.

6. Prospectus (should be no longer than 25 pages plus appendices)

Required Components of the Prospectus

*Items starred are typically part of a **modified prospectus** request

1. ABSTRACT (limit to one page or less) *

• Describe the proposed change with its date of implementation.

• If a new program, identify where it will be offered.

• If a new off-campus site or branch, list its complete physical address.

• Provide projected number of students, if applicable.

• Indicate the projected life of the program or site, if applicable (single cohort or ongoing).

• Describe the primary target audience.

• Describe the instructional delivery methods to be used.

• Describe strengths of the institution to undertake this change.

2. DETERMINATION OF NEED FOR THE CHANGE/RELATIONSHIP TO MISSION/PLANNING AND APPROVALS FOR THE CHANGE *

• Describe how the change is consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

• Describe the rationale and need for the program to include how the institution determined need.

• Provide evidence of legal authority for the change if approval is required by the governing board or the state.

• Provide documentation that faculty and appropriate other groups were involved in planning for and approval(s) of the change. (Department, Curriculum Council, TSUS Board of Regents and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

3. REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR THE SPECIFIC SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE (SELECT THE CHANGE RELEVANT TO THE PROSPECTUS AND PROVIDE ALL INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THAT PARTICULAR CHANGE)

For a NEW PROGRAM provide the following information:

• Provide the curriculum for the program and a projected schedule of course offerings.

• Provide specific programmatic goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program.

• Describe how the student learning outcomes for the program will be assessed.

• Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program.

• Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program.

• Demonstrate compliance with Standard 10.7 (Policies for awarding credit) [in part] of the *Principles of Accreditation (2018)*.

• Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program.

• For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in traditional formats have been achieved.

• Follow instructions in item 4 below for providing information concerning number and qualifications of faculty scheduled to teach in the program.

4. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS*

• Complete the Faculty Roster Form for faculty members scheduled to teach in the new program, in a degree completion program, at a new site or branch campus, or in programs to be offered by distance methodology for the first time. *Follow directions for completing the form which requires that the institution present the qualifications of each faculty member to teach the courses assigned to them. The form and instructions may be accessed at www.sacscoc.org under Institutional Resources or from a link on the Substantive Change page.*

• For a new program, the institution must demonstrate that it has at least one qualified faculty member to develop and/or teach discipline courses in the new program. Refer to Standard 6.2.a. (Faculty Qualifications) in the *Principles (2018)* concerning the determination of appropriate qualifications.

• Provide narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members will be adequate to support the initiative and describe the impact on faculty workload of the new program, new site, or distance delivery.

• Document scholarship and research capability of faculty members teaching in graduate programs and document faculty experience in directing student research.

5. LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES*

• List and describe discipline-specific learning resources to support a new program. Please do not list all resources located in the library if they do not relate to the specific change.

• Document discipline-specific refereed journals and primary source materials.

• If the institution is reliant on agreements with other libraries, provide a signed copy of each formal agreement and describe how the collections support the program(s).

• Describe specifically how students enrolled in a new program and/or enrolled in a program at an off-campus location and/or enrolled in a distance education program access these discipline-specific learning resources.

• Describe how students and faculty members will access information electronically.

• Describe how faculty and students are instructed in the use of online resources as well as on site library resources.

• Describe resources to support students in access to and use of learning resources.

Note: If electronic databases are listed, describe the discipline-specific suites of resources and not just the name of the database or the consortium through which it is accessed (such as Viva, TexShare, Galileo, Louis, etc.)

6. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

• Describe specific programs, services, and activities which will support students enrolled in the new program and/or enrolled at a new off-campus site and/or enrolled in distance education programs. Do not list student support services which are not relevant to the specific change.

7. PHYSICAL RESOURCES*

• Describe the adequacy of physical facilities which will support the change.

• Describe equipment which will be available for a new program or available at a new site.

• Describe the impact that the proposed change will have on physical facilities and equipment for existing programs and services.

8. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

    • Provide a business plan that includes all of the following (NOTE: This applies to ALL submissions

        (a) a description of financial resources available to support the proposed change, including a budget for the first year of the proposed change (a three-year budget is required for a new branch campus). **Do not send a copy of the entire institutional budget.**

        (b) projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow for the proposed change

        (c) the amount of resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services for the proposed change

        (d) the operational, management, and physical resources available for the change.

    • Provide contingency plans in the event that required resources do not materialize. The institution must disclose if it is currently on reimbursement for Title IV funding. Institutions currently on sanction with SACSCOC for financial reasons must provide a copy of the audit for the most recently completed fiscal year.

9. DESCRIPTION OF INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESSES FOR THE CHANGE

    • Provide a brief description of institutional assessment processes.

    • Describe how the institution will incorporate the change (program, site, distance education or other change) into the institution-wide review and assessment processes.

10. APPENDICES

    • Appendices may be used in hard copy (print) submissions to provide documentation supporting the narrative in the prospectus.

    • **NOTE: In hard copy submission tabs must be provided identifying each appendix (by name or number) referenced in the narrative.**

• Links may be provided in electronic submissions to link to documentation supporting the narrative in the prospectus. Be sure links allow reviewers to return to the narrative.

(*Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement,* June 2009, revised July 2016)

Approved: Deans Council 3/27/2018

TSUS

Implemented:

Review frequency: Annual