



# ***Substantive Change Policy and Procedures for SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation***

<b>Policy #:</b>	GU003.2
<b>Policy Type:</b>	University
<b>Responsible Executive:</b>	University President
<b>Responsible Office:</b>	SACSCOC Liaison
<b>Originally Issued:</b>	August 21, 2017
<b>Latest Revision:</b>	March 22, 2021
<b>Effective Date:</b>	March 22, 2021

## **I. Policy Statement**

The University of Louisiana Monroe (ULM) Substantive Change policy and procedures mirror those of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) to assure the public that all aspects of an institution continue to meet accreditation standards. The policy helps ensure substantive changes, if approved, do not hinder an institution's ability to continue meeting the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*.

## **II. Purpose of Policy**

The purpose of ULM's Substantive Change Policy is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion. A Substantive Change is 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 affect the quality of educational programs and services.

SACSCOC accredits an entire institution. Accreditation extends to all programs and services of an institution wherever located and however delivered. SACSCOC does not accredit individual programs, locations, or portions of an institution. Some new programs, locations, and other institutional changes, however, are subject to notification and/or approval. 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
- Substantially increasing 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

Other substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a substantive change
- An institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2 (Substantive change) of the *Principles of Accreditation* and with the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* and related policies, at minimum:
  - [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#) [PDF]
  - [Credit Hours](#) [PDF]
  - [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#) [PDF]
  - [Distance and Correspondence Education](#) [PDF]
  - [Dual Enrollment](#) [PDF]
  - [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status](#) [PDF]
  - [Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level](#) [PDF].
- An institution's fiscal and administrative capability to operate off-campus instructional sites is assessed when a new site is reviewed for approval and as part of decennial and fifth-year interim reviews.
- A new off-campus instructional site is subject to a substantive change committee visit. A committee visit, when necessary, is authorized when a site is approved. The committee visit ensures the site has the personnel, facilities, and resources identified by an institution in its application or prospectus and ensures the quality of instructional and support services offered at the site.

- Different or additional requirements apply to an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION. Restriction applies if an institution has been placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause over the prior three academic years, or if an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs.
- An institution placed or continued on Probation or Probation for Good Cause must submit to SACSCOC an institutional contingency teach-out plan within 30 days of the notification of the Board of Trustees action.

### **Non-Compliance**

Failure to comply with *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* or Standard 14.2 (Substantive Change) may put ULM’s institutional accreditation in jeopardy. An unreported Substantive Change may require a review of this Substantive Change Policy and Procedures document by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees, potentially to include a Substantive Change site visit from an accreditation team at ULM’s cost. Non-compliance subjects the institution to monitoring, sanction, or removal from membership. Failure to secure approval, if required, of a Substantive Change involving programs or locations that qualify for Title IV Federal Funding may place the institution in jeopardy with the U.S. Department of Education, including reimbursement of funds received related to an unreported substantive change.

## **III. Applicability**

Substantive Change Policy and Procedures specifically address requirements by Substantive Change type, organized by institutional changes, off-campus instructional site / additional location changes, and program changes.

## **IV. Definitions**

### **Additional location**

*See off-campus instructional site / additional location*

**Approval:** An official action by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees enabling an institution to implement a proposed Substantive Change. All changes requiring approval are defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. An institution secures approval by submitting a Substantive Change prospectus or application subject to satisfactory review by the Board of Trustees.

**Branch campus:** An off-campus instructional site / additional location

- that is geographically apart from an institution’s main campus,
- where instruction is delivered, and
- is independent of the main campus of an institution.

An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it

1. is permanent;
2. offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential;
3. has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
4. has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

**Closure:** The ending of instruction

- in an educational program,
- at off-campus instructional site,
- in an educational program at an off-campus instructional site or main campus,
- by a method of delivery, or
- at an entire institution such that a student cannot complete their program of study as planned. (*See also teach-out agreement and teach-out plan*)

**Competency-based education:** A method of delivery in which competencies are learned through interaction with faculty and an academic credential is earned based on what students demonstrate they can do. A competency is a well-defined statement of what a person can do as a result of learning. Progression and completion are measured by demonstrated attainment of competencies. (*See also competency-based education by course / credit-based approach, competency-based education by direct assessment, and method of delivery*)

**Competency-based education by course / credit-based approach:** Demonstrating competencies is embedded in a traditional curriculum with courses completed, credits earned, and a credential awarded. Students typically enroll in an academic term and course credits are awarded at the end of the term by demonstrating mastery of the competencies associated with a course. Students may accelerate learning through demonstration of competencies. Transcripts record courses and grades, though the institution may opt to maintain a separate transcript of competencies.

**Competency-based education by direct assessment:** Progression and completion of a program is based solely on demonstrating mastery of prescribed competencies. There are no academic terms (i.e., calendars), courses, or credit hours. Students progress through a program's competencies at their own pace within limits, if any, established by the institution. The academic transcript consists of successfully demonstrated competencies and the level of mastery attained.

**Cooperative academic arrangement:** An agreement between ULM and another entity (or entities) to deliver program content recorded on the ULM transcript as its own (see also Standard 10.9 (Cooperative academic arrangements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*). Examples include geographic or denominational consortia, statewide distance education agreements, collaborative agreements with international institutions, and contractual instruction.

**Correspondence courses:** Courses in which students and instructors are not in the same locations and in which instructional materials and learning assessments (such as examinations, assignments, creative works, etc.) are delivered electronically or by mail. Interaction between instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Courses are usually self-paced within limits.

#### **Direct Assessment**

*See competency-based education by direct assessment*

**Distance education:** A method of delivery in which the majority of instruction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same location. It includes synchronous (live or in real-time) and asynchronous (not live or in real time) instruction. (*See also method of delivery*)

**Distance learning**

*See distance education*

**Dual academic award:** A student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to each institution granting academic awards at the same credential level. *(See also joint academic award)*

**Educational program**

*See program*

**Face-to-face instruction:** A method of delivery in which the majority of instruction occurs when students and instructors are in the same location. *(See also method of delivery)*

**Federal regulations:** Rules and regulations of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) as codified in the Code of Federal Regulation (C.F.R.) including but not limited to 34 C.F.R. § 600, 602, 603, 654, 668, and 674 (*Federal Register*, Vol. 84, No. 212, November 1, 2019/Rules and Regulations; pp. 58834-58933), viz., § 600.2 (definitions), § 602.22 (substantive changes and other reporting requirements), and § 602.24 (additional procedures certain institutional agencies must have).

**Geographically apart** (or geographically separate): Non-contiguous locations independent of distance. *See also off-campus instructional site / additional location (and branch campus)*

**Joint academic award:** A student receives instruction at two (or more) institutions in prescribed curricula leading to the institutions granting a single academic award bearing the names, seals, and officials' signatures of each participating institution. *(See also dual academic award)*

**Method of delivery:** The principal method by which instruction is delivered to include: competency-based education (all forms), distance education, and face-to-face instruction.

**Notification:** An official communication from an institution to SACSCOC as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. A notification is complete only when accepted by SACSCOC upon satisfactory review by staff. *(See also approval)*

**Off-campus instructional site / additional location:** A location geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus and where instruction is delivered. An off-campus instructional site may qualify as a branch campus. *(See also branch campus)*

**Program:** a coherent course of study leading to a for-credit credential including a degree, diploma, certificate or other generally recognized credential. *Exception:* General education, for substantive change purposes, is usually considered a program even if a credential is not awarded. See also Standard 8.2.b (Student outcomes: general education) Standard 9.3 (General education requirements) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.

**Substantive Change Restriction:** Additional or different requirements for institutions meeting defined criteria. The criteria are defined in this policy and the additional or different requirements are identified for each substantive change type. These restrictions and the criteria for which institutions are affected are required by federal regulations.

**Teach-out:** The process and time period of a teach-out plan. *(See also closure, teach-out agreement, and teach-out plan)*

**Teach-out plan:** A written plan developed by an institution for students to complete their programs of study because it decided to end a program, off-campus instructional site, method of delivery, or to close the institution. A teach-out plan provides an orderly process, the equitable treatment of students, minimal disruption and additional costs to students, and covers all enrolled students regardless of their progress to completion. *(See also closure, teach-out, and teach-out agreement)*

**Teach-out agreement:** An optional written agreement with an institution or entity under which students covered by a teach-out plan may complete their programs of study. A teach-out agreement may include student eligibility criteria, time limits, fee waivers, tuition parity, or other negotiated terms. *(See also closure, teach-out, and teach-out plan)*

## V. Policy Procedure

### Substantive Change Checklist

Well in advance of any planning, faculty, staff, and/or administrators considering program, location, or other institutional changes (full list in Section II. Purpose of Policy) must complete a *Substantive Change Checklist* <https://webservices.ulm.edu/forms/get-form/1069> and submit to the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison as directed on the form.

A document specifying requirements and procedures for each type of substantive change is available at [www.ulm.edu/accredit](http://www.ulm.edu/accredit) and in the [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#) document.

### Informing University Employees of the Substantive Change Policy

The University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is responsible for ensuring that all employees who have the authority to initiate, review, approve, or allocate resources to changes that may be considered a Substantive Change understand and follow the SACSCOC and ULM Substantive Change Policy. To this end, the University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will make a presentation focused on the nature of Substantive Change and the expectations to President's Executive Council, Academic Affairs Dean's Council, and the University Curriculum Committee each fall and more often if needed. Reference materials will be posted to [www.ulm.edu/accredit](http://www.ulm.edu/accredit). Academic deans will discuss the Substantive Change Policy with program administrators in their colleges.

### Reporting Substantive Change to SACSCOC

For all types of Substantive Changes, materials for submission are prepared by the initiating entity, who secure applicable supervisory approvals. Approved materials are provided to the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison who, after review, facilitates submission to SACSCOC in accordance with its requirements. Depending on the nature of the Substantive Change, other steps and approvals may be necessary including approval by the University of Louisiana System and/or the Louisiana Board of Regents. In every case, the University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is responsible for oversight and processing of the materials required by SACSCOC.

It is imperative to note that SACSCOC substantive change review and approvals only occur twice per year, in December and July; therefore, the process of preparation and ULM approval of substantive change materials and submission to SACSCOC may need to occur up to two years in advance of

proposed implementation dates, depending on several factors. Consult with the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison for guidance on submission dates and potential approval timeline. These processes are independent of UL System and Louisiana Board of Regents approval processes for new programs, but may run concurrently with guidance and approval of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison.

It is the responsibility of the members of ULM's Executive Council to ensure the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is informed of potential changes which may require initiation of substantive change processes.

The Director of the Office of Extended Learning (EL) manages the initial approval of off-campus instructional sites for the purposes of delivering Dual Enrollment credit to high school students. Extended Learning also monitors the ongoing status of academic offerings at each SACSCOC approved site to ensure that Substantive Change policies are followed. The Extended Learning Director reports to the University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison every anticipated case of substantive change as it pertains to ULM's Dual Enrollment Program. The Extended Learning Director documents the number of credit hours offered at each school and contacts the University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison: (a) when twelve credit hours are offered at a site (20% of an associate's degree), and (b) when twenty-four hours are offered at a site (40% of an associate's degree). The Extended Learning Director provides the required materials to the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison for submission to SACSCOC.

## VI. Enforcement

The University President and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison are responsible for: (a) ensuring compliance with accreditation requirements, and (b) ensuring that all incidences of substantive change are reported in a timely manner as required by SACSCOC.

## VII. Policy Management

The University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is the responsible officer in charge of maintaining and disseminating this policy. This policy statement shall be reviewed and updated by the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison as changes occur to the SACSCOC policy on substantive change. Any questions regarding applicable procedures should be directed to the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison.

## VIII. Exclusions

None

## IX. Effective Date

The effective date of this policy is the date it is adopted and signed by the President.

## X. Adoption

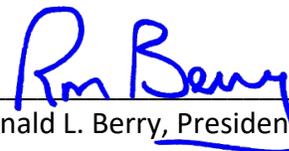
This policy is hereby adopted on this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2021.

Recommended for Approval by:

Approved by:



Dr. Judy A. Fellows, SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison



Dr. Ronald L. Berry, President

## **XI. Appendices, References and Related Materials**

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Site](#)

ULM Substantive Change Checklist

## **XII. Revision History**

Original adoption date: August 21, 2017.

Revised March 22, 2021. Entire policy was rewritten.