SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE PROCEDURE

Substantive changes may be initiated through the University’s planning process and facilitated by the Strategic Planning Committee. When an academic substantive change is under consideration, the planning process is initiated by the Department Chair/Program Coordinator working in conjunction with the College Dean. Administrative substantive change proposals are initiated by the Vice President of the respective administrative unit.

Roles and Responsibilities

**Faculty**: Responsible for course/program research and development. All curriculum changes should follow the Athens State University Curriculum Review Process.

**Department Chair/Program Coordinator**: Responsible for ensuring that all required approvals and notifications are received prior to scheduling or marketing courses. Each Department Chair or Program Coordinator should keep on file copies of substantive change requests, notifications, and SACSCOC approvals for each program, location (off-campus site) and delivery format (online) in which the program is offered.

**College Dean**: Responsible for ensuring that no substantive change is implemented without the prior approval through internal and external processes. College Deans are also responsible for notifying the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison at the time the project planning process begins, normally 12-18 months before a substantive change implementation is sought.

**Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs (PVPAA)**: Responsible for managing the approval process and ensuring that all internal and external approvals and notifications are completed on time.

**University Accreditation Liaison**: Responsible for providing leadership and guidance to all University personnel related to COC substantive change policies and procedures. The Liaison serves as a resource during planning and implementation of all substantive change projects and serves as the authorized contact for all institutional communication with the Commission.

**Office of Institutional Planning, Research and Assessment (OIPRA)**: Responsible for systematic collection, analysis, evaluation, and dissemination of valid and reliable data used to support and assist in the development of substantive change documents. The Director of OIPRA will assist with review and revision of substantive change prospectus documents. The OIPRA office will serve as the official repository of all SACSCOC documentation.

**Undergraduate Curriculum Committee**: Responsible for reviewing all curriculum proposals for addition or deletion of courses, changes in degree requirements, and changes in course descriptions for existing courses. The Committee also reviews all proposed new programs (certificates, minors and majors) suggested by the Department and supported by the College as evidenced by the completed Curriculum Review Request form.

**Graduate Education Council**: Responsible for reviewing all curriculum proposals for addition or deletion of graduate courses, changes in degree requirements, and changes in course descriptions for existing graduate courses. The Committee will also review all proposed new graduate programs.
Internal Planning and Approval Process for Substantive Change

The following University procedures have been developed to ensure timely and accurate adherence to all COC substantive change requirements.

Substantive Changes that require Approval Prior to Implementation are listed below as well as the institutional process that must be followed.

1. Initiating coursework, certificates, or programs of study at a different level than previously approved by SACSCOC
2. Initiating off-campus sites where students can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program
3. Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current programs)
4. Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site AND at the institution
5. Initiating degree completion programs
6. Initiating a branch campus
7. Relocating a main or branch campus
8. Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the SACSCOC accredited institution
9. Initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site at employer’s request and on short notice (both previously approved programs and new programs)
10. Altering significantly the length of a program
11. Changing from clock hours to credit hours

Timeline for Notification to SACSCOC:
Due dates for specific substantive change documents are posted by the Commission on Colleges. Most changes require submission to the COC at least 9 months in advance of the proposed change. Please contact the University's Accreditation Liaison to determine due dates.

Step 1
At the time the potential substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Curriculum Review Request Form (CRR) (for academic substantive changes) or the Substantive Change Checklist (for administrative substantive changes) This alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

For Academic Substantive Changes
All academic substantive changes must begin with the Curriculum Review Request (CRR) Form to be presented to either the Curriculum Committee (undergraduate curriculum) or the Graduate Education Council (graduate curriculum). No curriculum changes will be approved without a completed CRR. This form includes language specific to substantive program changes and is shared with the University’s Accreditation Liaison by the Provost’s Office as part of the approval process. (See Curriculum and Review Approval Process Flowchart)
For Administrative Substantive Changes
All administrative substantive changes must begin with a Substantive Change Checklist to be presented to the President’s Cabinet for review and approval. All approved substantive change checklists will be forwarded to the University’s Accreditation Liaison and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Step 2
Once the proposed substantive change has been approved through the appropriate internal process, the Accreditation Liaison and the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment will work with the proposer to prepare the substantive change prospectus. The President will begin the process of securing appropriate approvals from the President’s Cabinet, the University Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), when appropriate.

Step 3
Upon approval by all appropriate stakeholders, the Accreditation Liaison will submit the substantive change prospectus to SACSCOC.

Submission to SACSCOC
Official copies will be kept on file in the University’s official SACSCOC files and the final package will consist of:

- Original President’s Cover Letter
- Copy of the approved action item from the University’s Board of Trustees
- Copy of the approval letter from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (if appropriate)
- Completed Substantive Change Prospectus including all supporting documents
- Payment for Necessary Fees and Expenses
Substantive Changes that require Notification Only
Prior to Implementation are listed below as well as the institutional process that must be followed.

- For site-based/classroom group instruction (where the instructor is present):
  - Initiating an off-campus site at which a student may earn at least 25% but less than 50% of credits toward a program
  - Moving an approved off-campus instructional site within the same geographic area to serve essentially the same pool of students.
- For distance learning/technology-based group or individual instruction (where the instructor and student are geographically separated):
  - Offering for the first time credit courses via distance learning by which students can obtain at least 25% but less than 50% of credits toward an educational program.
- Initiating program/courses delivered through contractual agreement or a consortium
- Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution.
- Repackaging of an existing approved curriculum

Timeline for Notification to SACSCOC: The institution must provide written notification of the change to the SACSCOC prior to implementation. The letter must include the implementation date of the proposed change.

**Step 1**
At the time the potential substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Curriculum Review Request Form (CRR) (for academic substantive changes) or the Substantive Change Checklist (for administrative substantive changes). This alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

For Academic Substantive Changes

All academic substantive changes must begin with the Curriculum Review Request (CRR) Form to be presented to either the Curriculum Committee (undergraduate curriculum) or the Graduate Education Council (graduate curriculum). No curriculum changes will be approved without a completed CRR. This form includes language specific to substantive program changes and is shared with the University’s Accreditation Liaison by the Provost’s Office as part of the approval process. (See Curriculum and Review Approval Process Flowchart)

For Administrative Substantive Changes

All administrative substantive changes must begin with a Substantive Change Checklist to be presented to the President’s Cabinet for review and approval. All approved substantive change checklists will be forwarded to the University’s Accreditation Liaison and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

**Step 2**
Once the proposed substantive change has been approved through the appropriate internal process, the Accreditation Liaison and the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment will work with the proposer to prepare the Letter of Notification to SACSCOC. The President will begin the process of securing appropriate approvals from the President’s Cabinet, the University Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), when appropriate.
Step 3
Upon approval by all appropriate stakeholders the Accreditation Liaison will submit the Letter of Notification to SACSCOC.

Submission to SACSCOC
Official copies will be kept on file in the University’s official SACSCOC files and the final submission package will consist of:

- Official Letter of Notification from President to SACSCOC
- Copy of the approved action item from the University’s Board of Trustees
- Copy of the approval letter from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (if appropriate)
Substantive Changes that require Closing a Program or an Instructional Site are listed below as well as the institutional process that must be followed.

- Closing a Program, Instructional Site, Branch Campus or an Institution

**Step 1**
When a potential substantive change involving the closure of a program or instructional site is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the *Curriculum Review Request Form (CRR)* (for program closure) or the *Substantive Change Checklist Form* (for closing an instructional site). This alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

**NOTE:** Any proposal for these actions must include a Teach-Out Plan. All Teach-Out plans must be approved by the SACSCOC prior to implementation.

**Step 2**
Once the proposed substantive change has been approved through the appropriate internal process, the Accreditation Liaison and the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment will work with the proposer to prepare the Letter of Notification to SACSCOC along with the Teach-Out Plan. The President will begin the process of securing appropriate approvals from the President’s Cabinet, the University Board of Trustees and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), when appropriate.

**Step 3**
Upon approval by all stakeholders, the Accreditation Liaison will submit the Letter of Notification along with the Teach-Out Plan to SACSCOC.

**Submission to SACSCOC**

Official copies will be kept on file in the University’s official SACSCOC files and the final submission package will consist of:

- Original Letter of Notification from President to SACSCOC
- Teach-Out Plan
- Copy of the approved action item from the University’s Board of Trustees
- Copy of the approval letter from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (if appropriate)