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 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 Faculty 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 that a substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Substantive Change Checklist Form to the PVPAA and OIPRA offices. This electronic form alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

**Step 2**
The PVPAA notifies the President and the University Accreditation Liaison. The appropriate Vice President or College Dean, in coordination with the Department Chair/Program Coordinator, will prepare the Substantive Change Prospectus (1500-0916B). 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).

**For Academic Substantive Changes:**
The Prospectus is part of the required documentation to be presented to either the Curriculum Committee or the Graduate Faculty Council for all proposed academic changes. Curriculum changes will NOT be approved without a prospectus. Additionally, a printed copy of the completed Substantive Change Checklist should be included in the documentation submitted to the Curriculum Committee.
For Administrative Substantive Changes:
The Prospectus will be presented to the President’s Cabinet for review and approval.

**Step 3**
Upon approval, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee or the Graduate Faculty Council (for Academic Substantive Changes) or the President or his designee (for Administrative Substantive Changes) will forward a copy of the prospectus to the PVPAA who will share with the University Accreditation Liaison and OIPRA. The Liaison and the Director of OIPRA will review the document and recommend changes if needed to the PVPAA.

**Step 4**
The PVPAA will notify the President that the substantive change prospectus is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President prepares a cover letter and the package is sent to SACSCOC via certified mail.

**Submission to SACSCOC**
All documents will be submitted in both printed and electronic copy. Official copies of all submissions will be kept on file in OIPRA. The final package will consist of:
1. Original President’s Cover Letter
2. Substantive Change Prospectus
3. Completed Faculty Roster (if appropriate)
4. 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 that a substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Substantive Change Checklist Form to the PVPAA and OIPRA offices. This electronic form alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

**Step 2**
The PVPAA notifies the President and the University Accreditation Liaison. 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).

For Academic Substantive Changes:
The College Dean will submit the Substantive Change Checklist documentation to either the Curriculum Committee or Graduate Faculty Council for consideration and approval.

For Administrative Substantive Changes:
The Substantive Change Checklist will be presented to the President’s Cabinet for review and approval.

**Step 3**
Upon approval, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee or the Graduate Faculty Council (for Academic Substantive Changes) or the President or his designee (for Administrative Substantive Changes) will forward a copy of the Checklist to the PVPAA who will share with the University Accreditation Liaison and OIPRA. The Liaison and the Director of OIPRA will use the Checklist to develop a draft letter of notification to the SACSCOC and provide to the PVPAA.

**Step 4**
The PVPAA will notify the President that the substantive change notification is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President will finalize the notification letter and submit to SACSCOC.

**Submission to SACSCOC**
All documents will be submitted in both printed and electronic copy. Official copies of all submissions will be kept on file in OIPRA. The final package will consist of:

1. **Official Notification Letter from President to SACSCOC.**
Substantive Changes that require **Teach Out Plans** 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**

At the time that a substantive change is being considered, the College Dean or appropriate administrative Vice President must complete and submit electronically the Substantive Change Checklist Form to the PVPAA and OIPRA offices. This electronic form alerts the appropriate parties of a substantive change action.

**Step 2**

The PVPAA notifies the President and the University Accreditation Liaison. 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).

For **Academic Substantive Changes:**

The College Dean will develop a Teach Out Plan following SACSCOC guidelines and submit the Plan and the Substantive Change Checklist documentation to either the Curriculum Committee or the Graduate Faculty Council for consideration and approval.

For **Administrative Substantive Changes:**

The Substantive Change Checklist will be presented to the President’s Cabinet for review and approval.

**Step 3**

Upon approval, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee or the Graduate Faculty Council (for Academic Substantive Changes) or the President or his designee (for Administrative Substantive Changes) will forward a copy of the Checklist and the Teach-Out Plan to the PVPAA who will share with the University Accreditation Liaison and OIPRA. The Liaison and the Director of OIPRA will review the Teach-Out Plan and use the Checklist to develop a draft letter of notification to the SACSCOC and provide to the PVPAA.

**Step 4**

The PVPAA will notify the President that the substantive change notification is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President will finalize the notification letter and submit it and the Teach-Out Plan to SACSCOC.

**Timeline:** As soon as the decision to close is made, the institution should provide both a letter of notification and a Teach-Out Plan to the SACSCOC.

**NOTE:** Teach-Out Plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

**Submission to SACSCOC**

All documents will be submitted in both printed and electronic copy. Official copies of all submissions will be kept on file in OIPRA. The final package will consist of:

1. Official Notification Letter from President to SACSCOC
2. Teach-Out Plan