

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN  
STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of the General Counsel

**POLICY SUMMARY FORM**

**Policy Name:** Substantive Change

**Policy Number:** 4.10

**Is this policy new, being reviewed/revised, or deleted?** Review/Revise

**Date of last revision, if applicable:** 1/31/2017

**Unit(s) Responsible for Policy Implementation:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Purpose of Policy (what does it do):** As a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), SFA is responsible for notifying and, when necessary, seeking approval for substantive changes from the commission in accordance with the SACSCOC substantive change policy.

**Reason for the addition, revision, or deletion (check all that apply):**

- Scheduled Review       Change in law       Response to audit finding  
 Internal Review       Other, please explain:

*Please complete the appropriate section:*

**Specific rationale for new policy:**

**Specific rationale for each substantive revision:** Revisions include the addition of wording to bring the policy inline with the latest version of SACS substantive change policy.

**Specific rationale for deletion of policy:**

*Additional Comments:*

Reviewers:

Academic Policy Committee  
Steve Bullard, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Damon Derrick, General Counsel

## Substantive Change

**Original Implementation:** August 26, 2008

**Last Revision:** ~~January 31, 2017~~ October 28, 2019

Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) is committed to upholding all of the principles and policies of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The university is also committed to establishing and maintaining procedures to facilitate an effective and timely notification process regarding substantive changes.

As a member of SACSCOC, SFA is responsible for notifying and, when necessary, seeking approval for substantive changes from the Commission in accordance with the SACSCOC substantive change policy. The current policy is located on the SACSCOC website.

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

Notification is defined as a letter from the university president or designee to the president of the commission summarizing the proposed change. Approval is sought through the submission of a SACSCOC application or prospectus.

### Procedures

The university is required to notify THECB and SACSCOC of substantive changes and request approval, when required, prior to the initiation of the changes. The SFA SACSCOC liaison is responsible for coordinating efforts to identify the need for and creation of notification letters related to substantive change. The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for all communication with the appropriate governing body.

Under federal regulations, substantive change includes but is not limited to:

- Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved;
- Initiating off-campus sites (including but not limited to Early College High School, dual enrollment programs offered at a high school, and certificate programs);
- Expanding programs at current degree level *in a manner that constitutes a significant departure (e.g. replacing 25% or more of the courses for a major with new courses)*;
- Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites;
- Initiating degree completion programs;
- Initiating a branch campus;
- Initiating distance learning;
- Relocating a main or branch campus;
- Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) Title IV programs;
- Initiating dual or joint degrees;

- Initiating a new site;
- Initiating a direct assessment competency-based program;
- Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution;
- Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution;
- Acquiring any program or site from another institution;
- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing;
- Initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site at employer's request and on short notice (previously approved program);
- Initiating a certificate program *that is a significant departure from previously approved programs* at employer's request and on short notice;
- Adding a site under a U.S. military contract for a previously approved program;
- Altering significantly the length of a program;
- Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution;
- Changing from clock hours to credit hours;
- Moving an off-campus instructional site;
- Initiating programs or courses offered through ~~contractual agreement~~ *or a cooperative academic arrangement, including but not limited to a consortium, a collaborative agreement with an international institution, or a statewide distance education agreement;* or
- Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution.

When planning to make changes that may require substantive change notification and approval, proposal sponsors must consult with the SFA SACSCOC liaison to determine the appropriate procedure for the proposed change.

The SFA curriculum review cycle is the process used to identify substantive changes related to the addition, deletion, or modification of courses and degree programs. In addition, all proposals for distance education, off-campus sites and certificate program requests will follow the curriculum review process. All proposals must follow and document adherence to curriculum review and approval policies and processes described in the university policy on Curriculum Reviews, Modifications and Approvals (5.7). The SFA SACSCOC liaison will provide the information necessary to prepare a prospectus in accordance with the requirements outlined in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and THECB substantive change guidelines. The SACSCOC prospectus and/or THECB proposal must accompany the Curriculum Change Request.

At least once each academic year, the SACSCOC liaison will provide information to the academic deans, ~~and~~ division vice presidents, *and academic unit heads* regarding substantive change policies and procedures. During this session, the deans, ~~and~~ division vice presidents, *and academic unit heads* will identify potential substantive changes.

All substantive change education and review activities must be coordinated to allow ample time to satisfy the time frame for notification and/or approval as set by THECB and/or SACSCOC. SFA will adhere to the reporting times as specified in THECB guidelines and in the Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions policy statement.

The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for conducting an ongoing review of curricular revisions to identify changes that may be substantive in nature and may require reporting or prior approval by THECB and/or SACSCOC. The provost and vice president for academic affairs will determine whether changes are substantive and will initiate appropriate reporting and approval processes in compliance with THECB and SACSCOC policies and procedures.

**Cross Reference:** Curriculum Reviews, Modifications and Approvals (5.7); SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy; THECB guidelines

**Responsible for Implementation:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Contact for Revision:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Forms:** Forms for program revision, course proposals, substantive change, and distance education are available at the Academic Affairs website <http://www.sfasu.edu/acadaffairs/>.

**Board Committee Assignment:** Academic and Student Affairs