

Guidelines for Substantive Changes in Degree Programs

Office of Academic Affairs

A substantive change is defined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Commission on Colleges (COC) as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. For degree programs, substantive changes include the following types of modifications to existing programs:

- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in **content of method of delivery**, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated. This includes initiating distance learning, or increasing distance learning courses to 25-49% of a degree and over 50% of a degree.
- Addition of courses or program at a **degree or credential level above** that which is included in the institutions current accreditation or reaffirmation.
- Substantial **increase in the number of credit hours** awarded for successful completion of a program.
- Establishment of an **additional location geographically apart from the main campus** at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.

There are three procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes, ranging from SACS notification to SACS approval. As outlined in their policy statement "[Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges](#)," SACS must be notified or provide approval prior to implementation of the changes. The following notification/approval timetable must be followed.

18 months prior to substantive change implementation

Program administrators are requested to develop a **brief description** (one paragraph should suffice) of the program change they wish to invoke and submit it to Associate Provost Brian Mitchell via email (brian@tulane.edu). The request will be forwarded to Tulane's SACS Compliance Certification Committee who will make a recommendation to the program regarding which procedure to follow.

6 months prior to implementation

After the program change has been developed and approved by the appropriate internal governance bodies - for example, the school's curriculum committee - a final request for approval containing all of the **necessary documentation** for reporting to SACS must be submitted to Associate Provost Mitchell for approval by the SACS Compliance Certification Committee. A substantive change communication will be prepared by the Office of Academic Affairs and sent along with the required documentation to SACS.

Note that the initiation of **new degree programs** may also carry with it substantive change implications. Program administrators are requested to consult the [Guidelines for New Degree Programs](#) on the Provost's website before development.

These guidelines are to be reviewed annually by the Compliance Certification Committee.