



## Substantive Change Policy Effective January 1, 2021

### A. Overview and Background

The Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) substantive change policy and procedures assure the public that all aspects of an institution continue to meet standards. It helps ensure substantive changes, if approved, do not hinder an institution's ability to continue meeting the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation.

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 impact 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. However, some new programs, locations, and other institutional changes are subject to notification and/or approval as defined in Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.

### B. Policy

Florida Institute of Technology is responsible for complying with the substantive change policy set forth by its accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) available at [Substantive Change Policy and Procedure](#). All member institutions are responsible for following the policy by informing SACSCOC of changes in accord with the stated procedures and, when required, seeking approval prior to initiating that change.

Florida Institute of Technology requires that all university employees report potential substantive changes to the university Accreditation Liaison for determination and submission to SACSCOC as notification or for approval as outlined in the Substantive Change Policy and Procedure document. University employees may not implement a substantive change prior to receiving approval when appropriate from SACSCOC via the university's accreditation liaison.

Failure to report potential substantive changes to the university Accreditation Liaison for review or implementing a substantive change without approval may result in disciplinary action.

### C. Definitions

SACSCOC defines substantive change as "a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive changes includes:

- 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 increase 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.

#### D. Resources

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*;

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, Section 14.2;

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

Southern Association of College and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation:

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018-POA-Resource-Manual.pdf>

#### E. Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Vice Presidents (all levels), Deans (and Associates), and Directors:

Vice Presidents (all levels), Deans (and Associates), and Directors are responsible for

1. becoming familiar with policies and procedures in the SACSCOC substantive change document,
2. notifying the university-appointed Accreditation Liaison as early as possible about proposals or initiatives that may be considered substantive changes,
3. providing the Accreditation Liaison with the supporting data and documentation necessary for reporting such changes to the SACSCOC,
4. adhering to any timeline set forth by SACSCOC for purposes of review and prior approval of substantive changes.

#### Responsibilities of the university-appointed Accreditation Liaison

The university-appointed Accreditation Liaison is responsible for

1. providing the substantive change policy to all Vice Presidents (all levels), Deans (and Associates), and Directors on an annual basis,
2. maintaining a current copy of the SACSCOC policy on the university's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness website,
3. working with the Vice Presidents (all levels), Deans (and Associates), and Directors to determine whether a proposal is a substantive change and to generate the necessary letters, prospectus, and other documents for reporting to SACSCOC,
4. submitting the requested substantive change documents to SACSCOC, and
5. coordinating and necessary follow-up action.

#### **F. Procedure for Approval and Notification of Academic Changes:**

Responsible faculty members, chairs, department heads, and deans must report substantive changes to the university appointed accreditation liaison. Failure to report in a timely manner and according to SACSCOC policy will result in the delay of an offering. Requirements and timelines for SACSCOC reporting and implementation are included in the SACSCOC policy document specific to each substantive change.

1. Responsible faculty members and chairs must notify the Dean of the college of the intent to enter into a substantive change.
2. The dean must then notify the Provost of the intent to enter into a substantive change. After consulting with the Accreditation Liaison, the Provost will provide conditional approval.
  - a. *Academic Programs.* The New Program Plan, with completed budget, is conditionally approved by the Provost. The responsible party will then present their intent and all required signed paperwork to the appropriate curriculum committee, that is, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UGCC) or Graduate Council. Their purpose is to evaluate the proposed change against university standards and academic policies and to make revisions as appropriate. If approved, the curriculum committee will forward the required paperwork back to the Provost for final approval.
  - b. *Academic Agreement or New Site.* International academic agreements must be processed through the Office of the Provost. Authorization of all academic or new off-site agreements comes from the Provost.

3. Concurrently, the responsible faculty will provide substantive change information to the Accreditation Liaison who will coordinate the submission of notifications and other required materials to the SACSCOC.
4. The Accreditation Liaison will notify the President and the Provost of the submission of the substantive change notifications, prospectuses and other documentation to SACSCOC.
5. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) disseminate the SACSCOC substantive change approvals and facilitate the submission of subsequent documentations requested by SACSCOC. The Accreditation Liaison will also keep all substantive change submissions on file.

### **G. Procedure for Approval and Notification of Non-Academic Substantive Changes**

All administrator must report non-academic substantive changes within the appropriate timeline to the Accreditation Liaison.

1. Responsible academic or administrative officer must notify President or Provost as appropriate the accreditation liaison of the intent to enter into a substantive change.
2. The Office of the President or Office of the Provost will coordinate with the Accreditation Liaison who will coordinate the submission of notifications and other required material to SACSCOC.
3. The Accreditation Liaison will notify the President and the Provost of the submission of the substantive change notifications, prospectuses and other documentations to SACSCOC.
4. The OIRE will be responsible for disseminating SACSCOC substantive change approvals and facilitate the submission of subsequent documentations requested by SACSCOC. The Accreditation Liaison will also keep all substantive change submissions on file.

### **H. Timelines**

Per the SACSCOC Policy, “For a substantive change requiring approval by the full Board of Trustees (which meets biannually), to be implemented after the date of the Board meeting, the submission deadlines are

- March 15 for review at the Board’s biannual meeting in June of the same calendar year, and
- September 1 for review at the Board’s biannual meeting in December of the same calendar year.

For a substantive change requiring approval by the Executive Council of the Board of Trustees (which meets year-round) — OR — for a substantive change requiring notification only, the submission deadlines are

- January 1 for changes to be implemented July 1 through December 31 of the same calendar year, and
- July 1 for changes to be implemented January 1 through June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.”

### **I. Late Notification**

If an implemented, but unreported, change should occur that is determined to be substantive to the university, the appropriate Vice President (any level), Dean (or Associate), or Director must notify the university-appointed Accreditation Liaison immediately. The Accreditation Liaison must then notify SACSCOC according to the policy.

The current university-appointed Accreditation Liaison is Jessica L. Ickes, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research and Effectiveness, Phone 321-674-7569, email – [jickes@fit.edu](mailto:jickes@fit.edu) .

## **J. Risk of Non-Compliance**

Per SACSCOC, “If an institution is non-compliant with Substantive Change Policy and Procedures or Standard 14.2 (Substantive change), its accreditation may be in jeopardy. An unreported substantive change may require a review of the institution’s substantive change policy and procedures document by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. 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. “