



FLETCHER TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Policy # 1.202

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**Substantive Change College Policy**

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Authority:	SACSCOC	Effective Date:	11/01/2015
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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this document is to ensure that Fletcher Technical Community College (Fletcher) is in compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Comprehensive Standard (CS) 3.12.1.

CS 3.12.1: “The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission’s substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes (Substantive change).”

By establishing institutional processes within this document for recognizing changes that are substantive, Fletcher ensures its obligation of timely notification to SACSCOC as outlined in the Commission’s “Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions: Policy Statement.”

**Responsibility:**

Fletcher’s SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is the individual responsible for ensuring that processes within this college guide are utilized.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

SACSCOC defines a substantive change as any “significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution”

(<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>).

## **POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

### **Determining Whether a Change Is Substantive:**

To determine whether a change is substantive, any possible substantive change for the College should be immediately reported to Fletcher's SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to determine if the change fits the substantive definition as outlined by SACSCOC. If a change is deemed substantive, the accreditation liaison will ensure that the change's corresponding procedure (See below "Informing the Commission of a Substantive Change") is followed as well as ensure the maintenance of all related documentation. If a questionable substantive change is deemed not substantive enough for notification or approval (See Appendix B, "College Worksheets for Determining Whether Changes Are Substantive"), the accreditation liaison will ensure that documentation justifying such is maintained.

### **Informing the Commission of a Substantive Change:**

Informing the Commission of a substantive change requires following one of three procedures. Each procedure is dependent on the substantive nature of the change.

- **Procedure 1** relates to changes requiring notification and approval prior to implementation.
- **Procedure 2** relates to changes requiring only notification prior to implementation.
- **Procedure 3** relates to closing a program, site, branch campus, or institution requiring prior approval.

Each procedure is detailed in the Substantive Change policy document for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions. Consult with the College's Accreditation Liaison to ensure that proper processes are completed for a substantive change's corresponding procedure when a substantive change is deemed.

All correspondences related to a substantive change regardless of procedure should be addressed to:

Dr. Belle Wheelan, President  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, GA 30033

Letters of notification and cover letters accompanying submissions must be presented on the institution's letterhead and signed by the institution's president or designated representative.

## Guidelines for Reporting Various Types of Substantive Changes:

The table below presents an overview of substantive change types to include corresponding general guidelines for each change. Some changes are more substantively obvious than others. For less obvious substantive changes, worksheets are available to assist with determining whether action is needed. The first step is to determine whether a change is substantive and, if so, to determine the exact nature of the substantive change. The College’s SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison should be consulted for any change to which the extent of “substantiveness” is questionable. The accreditation liaison will facilitate the process outlined under a substantive change’s respective procedure by coordinating all communication to SACSCOC and providing appropriate document templates to College personnel for completion to accompany submission.

For more information, refer to the “Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions” manual located on the SACSCOC website.

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Application for Level Change  Due dates: April 8 or September 15
Expanding at current degree level <i>if the expansion is a significant departure*</i>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a <i>branch campus</i>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Relocating a main campus or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic region)	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	N/A	Letter of notification with new address and starting date
Initiating degree completion programs	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Prospectus

Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice					
...using existing approved courses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Modified prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating other certificate programs					
...using existing approved courses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
...at a new off campus site (previously approved program)	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Contact Commission Staff ( <i>Also see page 16, item 9 of the manual</i> )
Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution: (See “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards” policy in the manual)					

Joint Programs: with another SACSCOC accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	N/A	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
Joint Programs: with an institution not accredited by SACSCOC	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Dual Programs	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school)					
Student can obtain 50% or more credits toward program	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Prospectus
...Student can obtain 25-49% of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	N/A	Letter of notification
...Student can obtain 24% or less	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<b>Types of Change</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Prior Notification Required</b>	<b>Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC</b>	<b>Prior Approval Required</b>	<b>Documentation</b>
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites					
...Adding approved programs that ARE NOT significantly different from current programs at the site	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
...Adding approved programs that ARE significantly different from current programs <u>at the site but NOT at the institution</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Adding programs that ARE significantly different from current programs <u>at the site AND at the institution</u>	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the length of a program	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Modified prospectus

Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency, and other pertinent information
Initiating a direct assessment competency based program	See SACSCOC Policy "Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs"	Yes	6 months	Yes	Submit "Screening Form" with letter of notification  If Prospectus required, due dates: April 8 or Sept 15
Initiating distance learning...					
Offering 50% or more of a program for the first time	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Prospectus
...Offering 25-49%	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Offering 24% or less	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	N/A	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement



Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
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 COC accredited institution	1	N/A	N/A	Yes	Prospectus
...if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	N/A	Copy if the signed agreement
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	See SACSCOC policy "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus  Due dates: April 8 or Sept 15
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	See SACSCOC policy "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status"	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus  Due dates: April 8 or Sept 15

Acquiring any program or site from another institution	See SACSCOC policy “Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status”	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing	See SACSCOC policy “Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status”	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution					
...Institution to teach out its own students	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
...Institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	3	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification

*\*To assess further whether a change in question is a significant departure, answers to specific questions can be applied to the “Significant Departure Worksheet” located in Appendix B.*

**Reference:**

**Glossary of Terms:**

See Appendix A.

## Appendix A

### Glossary of Terms

The following glossary of terms can be found in the “Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions” document found on the SACSCOC website.

#### **Branch campus**

A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location

- is permanent in nature;
- offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential;
- has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
- has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

#### **Contractual agreement**

A contractual agreement typically is one in which an institution enters an agreement for receipt of courses/programs or portions of courses or programs (i.e., clinical training internships, etc.) delivered by another institution or service provider.

#### **Consortial relationship**

A consortial relationship typically is one in which two or more institutions share in the responsibility of developing and delivering courses and programs that meet mutually agreed upon standards of academic quality.

#### **Correspondence education**

Correspondence education is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced.

#### **Degree completion program**

A program typically designed for a non-traditional undergraduate population such as working adults who have completed some college-level course work but have not achieved a baccalaureate degree. Students in such programs may transfer in credit from courses taken previously and may receive credit for experiential learning. Courses in degree completion programs are often offered in an accelerated format or meet during evening and weekend hours, or may be offered via distance learning technologies.

## **Direct assessment competency-based educational programs**

Federal regulations define a direct assessment competency-based educational program as an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, uses direct assessment of student learning relying solely on the attainment of defined competencies, or recognizes the direct assessment of student by others. The assessment must be consistent with the accreditation of the institution or program using the results of the assessment.

## **Distance education**

Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

## **Dual degree**

Dual degree is separate program completion credentials each of which bears only the name, seal, and signature of the institution awarding the degree to the student.

## **Educational program**

An educational program is a coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (i.e., a degree, diploma or certificate).

## **Geographically separate**

An instructional site or branch campus that is located physically apart from the main campus of the institution.

## **Joint degree**

A joint degree is a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the two or more institutions awarding the degree to the student.

## **Modified prospectus**

A prospectus submitted in lieu of a full prospectus for certain designated substantive changes. When a modified prospectus is acceptable, the Commission specifies requested information from the institution.

## **Notification**

Notification is a letter from an institution's chief executive officer, or his/her designated representative, to SACSCOC President summarizing a proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the complete physical address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site or branch campus. The policy and procedures for reporting and

review of institutional substantive change are outlined in the document “Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges.”

### **Significant departure\***

A program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine whether a new program is a “significant departure,” it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?
- Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?
- Will significant additional financial resources be needed?
- Will a significant number of new courses will be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members will be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

*\*To assess further whether the change in question is a significant departure, answers to the above questions can be applied to the “Significant Departure Worksheet” located in Appendix B, “College Worksheets for Determining Whether a Change Is Substantive.”*

### **Teach-out agreement**

A teach-out agreement is a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50% or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.

### **Teach-out plan**

A teach-out plan is a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50% or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

**Distribution:** Distributed Electronically via College's Internet.

**APPROVAL:**

Reviewing Council/Entity	Approval Date
Academic Policies and Procedures	04/12/2016
College Council	05/18/2016
Executive Cabinet	00/00/0000

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Kristine Strickland, Ph.D.  
Chancellor

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Date