



University Policy on Substantive Changes

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Responsible Office:	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Responsible Executive:	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Applies to:	University Community

POLICY STATEMENT

Norfolk State University is committed to adhering to the policies and requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). In accordance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies, Norfolk State University will notify or secure approval from SACSCOC and SCHEV (if applicable) before implementing any substantive change. Norfolk State University has established procedures to ensure compliance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies that provide information to faculty and staff regarding curricular and organizational changes requiring notification and approval. This substantive change policy applies to Vice Presidents, Deans, Department Chairs, Program, and Department Directors, Undergraduate and Graduate Program Coordinators, college/school and departmental Curriculum Committees, and faculty and staff wishing to make a curricular or organizational change.

PURPOSE

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accredits the entire institution and not individual programs. SACSCOC is responsible for reviewing all major institutional changes between scheduled evaluation periods, determining whether or not the substantive change has affected or threatened the quality of the institution's programs and services, and determining whether the institution remains in compliance with SACSCOC policies. Therefore, prior to implementing a substantive change, it is the institution's responsibility to follow the Substantive Change Procedures of SACSCOC and inform SACSCOC of such change in accord with those procedures. The U.S. Department of Education recognizes SACSCOC as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. To maintain its recognition with the Department of Education, SACSCOC is required to adhere to all federal laws and regulations associated with its status and must include in its policies provisions requiring prior approval of branch campuses and similar off-campus programs and distance learning activities before extending or continuing an



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institution's accreditation.

In addition, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is charged by the Code of Virginia, Section 23-9:6:1, with various responsibilities, authorities, and duties related to review, approval, and disapproval of academic programs proposals and changes. SCHEV has established policies and procedures related to academic programs at public institutions as part of its obligation "to promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the State of Virginia" (Code of Virginia, Section 23- 9.3[a]).

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DEFINITIONS

Substantive Change: is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive Changes include high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of education programs and services.

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

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

CONTACT(S)

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs officially interprets this policy and is



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responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions required by [BO.V. Policy #01 \(2014\) *Creating and Maintaining Policies*](#) throughout the appropriate governance structures. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

STAKEHOLDER(S)

The University campus community-at-large.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY CONTENTS

In accordance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies, Norfolk State University will notify or secure approval from SACSCOC and SCHEV prior to implementing substantive changes. Substantive changes include but are not limited to:

- 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.
- Program Mergers
- Program name Changes
- C.I.P. Code Changes
- 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 (H.E.A.) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the



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accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.

- 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.

The institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2 (Substantive Change) of the Principles of Accreditation and with the Substantive Change Policy and Procedures and related Policies. For example, SACSCOC requires notification prior to implementation when offering 25-49% of the coursework necessary for program completion online, off-campus, or through distance education. SACSCOC requires notification at least six months in advance and prior approval when offering 50% or more of the coursework necessary for program completion online, off-campus, or through distance education. Also, SACSCOC requires submission of a prospectus, six to 12 months before changes such as new degree programs that are a significant departure from current degree program offerings are implemented (e.g., Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering, which is significantly different from the existing doctoral program offerings in clinical psychology and social work).

SCHEV requires prior approval for all new degree and spin-off programs before initiation. SCHEV asks for new degree program proposals nine months before initiation. Spin-off program proposals require approximately three months for review and action. SCHEV also requires notification and approval for program discontinuation, program mergers, and other program changes such as degree designation, title, and C.I.P. Code. Also, SCHEV notification and approval are required for organizational changes at or above the departmental level.

When preparing and reviewing course and program proposals that may involve a substantive change, proposal sponsors (i.e., faculty) and curriculum committees must follow and document adherence to curriculum review and approval policies and processes described in the Curriculum Manual. In addition, academic units proposing a new program or requesting approval for changes



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falling under the SACSCOC or SCHEV definitions for substantive or organizational changes must prepare a prospectus in accordance with the requirements outlined in the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and SCHEV policies related to program approvals and changes. The SACSCOC prospectus and SCHEV proposal must accompany the Curriculum Change Request and must be reviewed and acted upon by the University Curriculum Committee at the time of the request for curriculum change in accordance with N.S.U. policies and procedures for curriculum review and approval.

The Vice Provost or a designee 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 SACSCOC and SCHEV. The Vice Provost will make the final determination of changes that are substantive in nature, will initiate appropriate reporting and approval processes in compliance with SACSCOC, SCHEV, and N.S.U. policies and procedures, and will refer the requests to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison for action in accordance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies and procedures.

EDUCATION AND COMPLIANCE

- The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs provides training to employees on this policy's requirements continuously through in-person and virtual meetings.
- Records of the training are maintained in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- Reports regarding institutional effectiveness and assessment results are completed by the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and disseminated or shared with the University community.
- The institution is required to have a written substantive change policy and procedure. It must be approved through institutional processes and published in institutional documents accessible to those affected. The purpose of the institution's substantive change policy and procedure is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC and SCHEV in a timely fashion as required by Substantive Change Policy and Procedures. The University is responsible for implementing and enforcing this substantive change policy and procedure. Failure to implement the policy may result in the University being out of compliance with SACSCOC standards and SCHEV requirements.

PUBLICATION

The University Policy on Substantive Change will be published and disseminated to the University community-at-large. The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will make every effort to:

- Communicate the policy in writing to the University community-at-large within 14 days of



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- approval;
- Submit the Substantive Change Policy for inclusion in the online Policy Library within 14 days of approval;
 - Post the Substantive Change Policy on the Academic Affairs Website; and Educate and train all stakeholders and appropriate audiences on the policy's content, as necessary.

EVALUATION

Every three years, this policy shall be evaluated by the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. After evaluating this policy, improvements or recommendations to strengthen the University Policy on Substantive Change must be submitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs for review.

REVIEW SCHEDULE

Next Scheduled Review: 11/04/2024

Approval by, date: President, 01/12/2015; 11/04/2021

Revision History: 03/17/2014; 04/16/2018; 04/27/2021

Supersedes: 30:040 University Policy on Substantive Change

RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Norfolk State University Curriculum Manual](#)

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy](#)

[SCHEV Academic Approval Policy](#)

[SCHEV Organizational Change Policy](#)

FORMS

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Cover Sheet](#)

[Academic Program Cover Sheets](#)

[Organizational Change Cover Sheet](#)