



## University Policy on Substantive Changes

**Title:** Substantive Changes Policy

**Policy Type:** Administrative

**Policy Number:** 30-10 (2014)

**Approval Date:** 01/12/2015

**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 Commission on Colleges 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 SACSCOC and SCHEV of substantive changes prior to initiation and will seek approval of changes. Norfolk State University also is committed to establishing procedures to ensure compliance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies and providing 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 an entire institution and not individual programs or individual institutional substantive changes. Its relationship is to the institution and not individuals or individual programs. It is responsible for reviewing all major institutional changes which occur between scheduled evaluation periods, determining whether or not the substantive change has affected or threatens the quality of the programs and services offered by the institution, determining whether the institution remains in compliance with

SACSCOC policies, and deciding whether or not to continue the institution’s membership (i.e., accreditation). Therefore, prior to the implementation of a substantive change, it is the responsibility of an institution to follow the Substantive Change Procedures of SACSCOC and inform SACSCOC of such change in accord with those procedures. SACSCOC is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. In order 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 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 program 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]).

Norfolk State University is committed to adhering to the policies, procedures, and requirements of SACSCOC and SCHEV.

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## DEFINITIONS

**Substantive Change** is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes institutional activities such as (1) changing the established institutional mission or objectives, (2) changing the institution's legal status, form of control, or ownership, (3) adding courses/programs that represent a significant departure in content or in method of delivery, (4) adding courses/programs at a degree or credential level above the institution's current accreditation, (5) changing from clock hours to credit hours for completion of a program, (6) adding an off-campus location at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program, or (7) establishing a branch campus (Sources): <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf>; <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>;

## CONTACT(S)

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs officially interprets this policy. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by [BOV 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.

## STAKEHOLDERS

The University campus community-at-large.

## SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY CONTENTS

In accordance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies, Norfolk State University will notify SACSCOC and SCHEV of substantive changes prior to initiation and will seek approval of changes. Substantive changes include but are not limited to:

- Off-campus course and program offerings
- Distance education course and program offerings
- Online course and program offerings
- Transmission of courses or programs through electronic means including teleconferencing
- Courses and programs offered in conjunction with another institution through consortia or dual degree requirements
- Adding a significantly different program
- Initiating degree completion programs
- Remaining or establishing new academic organizational units (e.g., departments, colleges or schools)
- Establishing a branch campus or off-campus instructional site
- Establishing a merger or consolidation

- Discontinuing a program or instructional site
- Changes in governance

Norfolk State University is required to notify SACSCOC and SCHEV of substantive changes and seek approval in accordance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies. For example, SACSCOC requires notification prior to implementation when offering 25-49% of the coursework required 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 required for program completion online, off-campus, or through distance education. Also, SACSCOC requires notification, including submission of a prospectus, and approval six to 12 months before certain changes are initiated such as new degree programs that are a significant departure from current degree program offerings (e.g., Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering which is significantly different from existing doctoral program offerings in clinical psychology and social work).

SCHEV requires prior approval for all new degree and spin-off programs before the programs are initiated. 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 CIP Code. Also, SCHEV notification and approval is 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<sup>1</sup>. In addition, academic units proposing a new program or requesting approval for changes 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<sup>2</sup> and SCHEV policies related to program approvals and changes<sup>3</sup>. 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 NSU policies and procedures for curriculum review and approval.

The Vice Provost (curriculum management) 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. The Vice Provost (curriculum management) 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 NSU policies and procedures, and will refer the requests to the Provost and

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nsu.edu/iea/image/curriculum\\_manual.pdf](http://www.nsu.edu/iea/image/curriculum_manual.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/2002PoliciesProcedures4ApprovalsChanges.pdf>

Vice President for Academic Affairs and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison for action in accordance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies and procedures at:

<http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/PoliciesProceduresPublicInstitutionsInternalOff-CampusOrgChanges.pdf>. Additional information about SCHEV policies and procedures regarding program level approvals is available at:

<http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/2011ProgramPolicy.pdf>

Additional information about SCHEV policies and procedures regarding organizational changes is available at:

<http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/PoliciesProceduresPublicInstitutionsInternalOff-CampusOrgChanges.pdf>

## **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, electronically or otherwise, to the University community-at-large within 14 days of 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.

Failure to satisfy procedural requirements does not invalidate this policy.

## **EVALUATION**

An evaluation study is recommended after one year, but not later than two years after the University Policy on Substantive Change has been implemented. The successes and failures of the University Policy on Substantive Change should be determined, and any recommendations for strengthening the initiative should be forwarded to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

## **REVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Next Scheduled Review:** 04/16/2021

**Approved by, date,** President, 01/12/2015

**Revision History:** March 17, 2014; April 16, 2018

**Supersedes** 30:040 University Policy on Substantive Change

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy is available at:  
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/substantive%20change%20policy.pdf> and

SCHEV Change Policy at:  
<http://www.schev.edu/AdminFacultyProceduresPublicInstitutionsInternalOff-CampusOrgChanges.pdf>

**FORMS:** *There are no forms associated with this policy and procedures.*