

SRTC Procedure: Substantive Change

Introduction

Southern Regional Technical College (SRTC) notifies the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of proposed changes in accordance with the Commission's policy, "Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions." SRTC acknowledges the Commission's definition of substantive change as "...a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes:

1. Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution;
2. Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution;
3. The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated;
4. The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation;
5. A change from clock hours to credit hours;
6. A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program;
7. The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program;
8. The establishment of a branch campus;
9. Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus, or institution;
10. Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or a joint academic program with another institution;
11. Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution;
12. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution; and
13. Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs."

SRTC follows Commission Policy and as required in SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.12 and 3.12.1. as follows: 1) by "...notifying the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes;" 2) by implementing the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia (SBTCSSG) Policy 2.3.5: Technical College Substantive Change Reporting; and 3) by having a SRTC procedure "... to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion." SRTC understands SACSCOC requirements and accepts that failure of the College "to gain approval for substantive changes involving programs that qualify for federal financial assistance could result in the institution jeopardizing such funding."

Depending upon the nature of the substantive change, SACSCOC employs one of three procedures to address the changes as defined by the Commission's policy, "Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions." The three procedures are described as follows:

Procedure One: The Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Approval Prior to Implementation (notification may also be required);

Procedure Two: The Review of Substantive Changes Requiring **Only** Notification Prior to Implementation (some changes also require submission of additional documents); and

Procedure Three: Closing a Program, Site, Branch Campus, or Institution.

The procedure for “Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status,” is addressed in a separate SACSCOC document. Also, procedures for approval of direct assessment competency-based education programs are in a separate document, “Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs.” This SRTC procedure does not address these types of substantive changes.

The initiation or revision of programs not offered for academic credit and that are not eligible for federal financial aid does not require reporting; however, such programs are subject to review at the time of reaffirmation.

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are included in the **Different Types of Substantive Change and Specific Procedure to be Used** chart that follows. In order for the College to remain in compliance with SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*, SRTC will report all substantive changes within a timeframe defined in the chart that follows. This chart will be adjusted in accordance with changes made to the Commission policy.

The College will also submit requests/notifications to SACSCOC in cases where the SRTC Financial Aid Department needs documentation from SACSCOC of program approval(s) or program name change(s) to submit to the Department of Education for the purpose of program Title IV Eligibility, even though the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy does not require the submission of requests or notifications.

A **Glossary of Terms** is included from the Commission’s policy, “Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions” below the chart that follows. This is included to ensure that terminology referenced in this procedure is clear.

Procedures

The following procedures are established to assist the College in communicating required changes to the Commission. The procedures may vary according to the nature of the specific substantive change and to local and Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) requirements.

1. The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs informs the President’s Leadership Cabinet (PLC) at regularly scheduled meetings of intended changes;
2. The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs meets with the Academic Affairs Committee and with the Faculty Senate who provide review and input for intended changes;
3. The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs then meets with PLC and intended changes are approved or disapproved;
4. The local Board of Directors (BOD) reviews and recommends or does not recommend intended changes, as applicable;
5. The State Board approves or does not approve intended changes, as applicable;
6. The Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness works with appropriate staff to prepare appropriate correspondence and/or materials for submission to SACSCOC;
7. The President provides input to correspondence and/or materials to SACSCOC; and

8. The President submits correspondence and/or materials to the SACSCOC President.

Responsibility

The Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness has the overall responsibility for ensuring this procedure is implemented.

Reference:

[SACSCOC Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#)
[SBTCSSG Policy 2.3.5: Technical College Substantive Change Reporting](#)

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Different Types of Substantive Change and Specific Procedure to be Used

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are included in the table that follows. **Please read the full text under the appropriate procedure in the SACSCOC Policy “Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions” for details regarding reporting.**

*The College will also submit requests/notifications to SACSCOC in cases where the SRTC Financial Aid Department needs documentation from SACSCOC of program approval(s) or program name change(s) to submit to the Department of Education (DOE) for the purpose of program Title IV Eligibility, even though the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy does not require.

Types of Change	SACSCOC Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required to SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	SRTC Recommendations/ Approval's Required
1. Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: March 15 (for June review) September 1 (for December review)	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
2. Initiating off-campus sites where student can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program (including but not limited to Early College High School, dual enrollment programs offered at a high school, and certificate programs that are not at employer's request and not on short notice)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board if another TCSG new designated "Campus"
3. Expanding at current degree level (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
4. Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site AND at the institution	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
5. Initiating degree completion programs	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
6. Initiating a branch campus (see definition of "branch campus" on page 8 of this document)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
7. Initiating distance learning by offering 50% or more of the first program for the first time	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD

Types of Change	SACSCOC Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required to SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	SRTC Recommendations/ Approval's Required
8. Relocating a main or branch campus	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
9. 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 SACSCOC accredited institution	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
10. Initiating dual or joint degrees involving program expansion (significant departure) or initiating a new site where student can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program	See SACSCOC policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards"	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation Copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution, and additional details on non-SACSCOC institution(s) involved. See Policy	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board if another TCSG new designated "Campus"
11. Initiating dual or joint degree with at least one institution not accredited by SACSCOC	See SACSCOC Policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards"	At least 6 months prior to implementation	Yes	Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution, and additional details on non-SACSCOC institution(s). See Policy.	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
12. Initiating a direct assessment competency-based program	See SACSCOC Policy "Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs"	Yes – Screening Form	Yes	Submit "Screening Form" with letter of notification. If Prospectus is required, Due dates: March 15 (for June review) September 1 (for December review)	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
13. 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: December 15 (for June review); June 1 (for December review)	Yes	Cover Sheet Institutional Summary Form Prospectus (See Appendix in SACSCOC Policy: "Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status") Due dates: March 15 (for June review); September 1 (for December review)	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
14. Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution					
15. Acquiring any program or site from another institution					
16. Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing					
17. Initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site at employer's request and on short notice (previously approved program)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Modified prospectus Contact Commission Staff.	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board if another TCSG new designated "Campus"
18. Initiating a certificate program that is a significant departure from previously approved programs at employer's request and on short notice	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Modified prospectus Contact Commission Staff.	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board

Types of Change	SACSCOC Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required to SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	SRTC Recommendations/ Approval's Required
19. Adding a site under a U.S. military contract for a previously approved program	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Modified prospectus Contact Commission Staff.	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
20. Altering significantly the length of a program	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Modified prospectus Contact Commission Staff.	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
21. Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Modified prospectus Contact Commission Staff.	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
22. Changing from clock hours to credit hours	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency, and other pertinent information	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
23. Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification with old address, new address, and implementation date	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
24. Initiating dual or joint degrees with other SACSCOC accredited institution(s)	See SACSCOC Policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards"	At least 6 months prior to implementation	No	Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution. See Policy.	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
25. Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
26. Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the SACSCOC accredited institution					
27. Initiating off-campus sites where student can obtain 25-49% of credits toward a program (including but not limited to Early College High School, dual enrollment programs offered at a high school, and certificate programs that are not at employer's request and not on short notice)	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification including street address and implementation date	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
28. Initiating distance learning by offering 25-49 of the first program for the first time					
29. Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution where the institution plans to teach out its own students	Procedure 3	Yes	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board

Types of Change	SACSCOC Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required to SACSCOC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC	SRTC Recommendations/ Approval's Required
30. Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution where the institution plans contracts with another institution(s) to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	Procedure 3	Yes	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement(s) detailing terms included with notification	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
31. Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice using existing approved courses and location	NA	No	No	NA	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
32. Initiating certificate program (not at employer's request and not on short notice) using existing approved courses and location	NA	No	No	NA	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD -State Board
33. Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school) where student can obtain 24% or less of credits toward a program	NA	No	No	NA	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
34. Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding approved programs that ARE NOT significantly different from current programs at the site	NA	No	No	NA	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
35. Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding approved programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site but NOT at the institution	NA	No	No	NA	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD
36. Initiating distance learning by offering 24% or less of any program for the first time	NA	No	No	NA	-Academic Affairs Committee -Faculty Senate -PLC -SRTC BOD

[Note: This chart is prepared from the SACSCOC Policy dated Adopted: Executive Council, March 2016; Edited, July 2016; Revised, SACSCOC Board of Trustees, December 2016.]

The three **SACSCOC Substantive Change Procedures** referenced in the above chart are detailed in the SACSCOC Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions: Policy Statement, pages 15-23.

Glossary of Terms

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 - 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 - 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 - 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 learning by others. The assessment must be consistent with the accreditation of the institution or program using the results of the assessment.

Distance education - 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 - 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 - 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 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.

[Note: SACSCOC specifies that a modified prospectus can be submitted for workforce development certificate programs consisting of the following: 1) the name of the certificate; 2) date of implementation; 3) the complete physical address of the off-campus site (if applicable); 4) a faculty roster; 5) a discipline-specific description of library/learning resources; 6) a description of physical facilities; and 7) descriptions of courses to be offered at the site. Reference: SACSCOC Sub-Change Policy-Procedure One, Part 2, page 15].

Notification - 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 SACSCOC Accredited Institutions."

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 be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

Teach-out agreement - 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 fifty percent 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 written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides fifty percent 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.

The **Glossary of Terms** is included from the SACSCOC Policy "[Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#)," pages 3-4.