

Policy 2102
Substantive Change Reporting Requirements

Date of Current Revision: February 2013

Primary Responsible Officer: Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Secondary Responsible Officer: SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison

1. PURPOSE

This policy exists specifically to establish, clarify and communicate the requirement that all university changes deemed to be "substantive" must be approved by the president and Board of Visitors, with subsequent notification to and/or approval by the university's regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

The policy defines what changes are deemed to be "substantive" and the requirements, procedures and processes for coordinating the university's timely and complete notification of substantive changes to SACSCOC. This policy is primarily designed to address academic programs and curricular issues, although other defined substantive changes are also covered.

2. AUTHORITY

The Board of Visitors has been authorized by the Commonwealth of Virginia to govern James Madison University. See Code of Virginia section 23-164.6; 23-9.2:3. The board has delegated the authority to manage the university to the president.

STATE OR FEDERAL STATUTE AND /OR REGULATION

SACSCOC accredits the university and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. The SACSCOC is recognized by the United States Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in federally funded programs. SACSCOC requires accredited institutions to follow the substantive change procedures of the association. In order to retain accreditation, the university is required to comply with SACSCOC procedures concerning substantive changes.

This policy is enacted pursuant to the SACSCOC policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges," edited February 2013
(<http://sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>).

3. DEFINITIONS

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 (1) permanent in nature; (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

Consolidation:

The combination or transfer of the assets of at least two distinct institutions (corporations) to that of a newly formed institution (corporation). For the purposes of accreditation, consolidations are considered substantive changes requiring review by the COC. (Examples include: two senior colleges consolidating to form a new institution.)

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.

Distance Learning:

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, DVDs and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

Dual Degree:

A 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.

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.

Level:

SACSCOC's taxonomy which categorizes institutions by the highest degree offered, in which the university is designated as a Level VI institution.

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:

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.

Off-Campus Site:

A campus location providing educational course and/or program offerings that is at a different address than the main campus location.

Procedure One:

Substantive changes requiring notification, submission of an application or a prospectus and approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees prior to implementation by the institution. Details on

which substantive changes require the university to follow Procedure One are available in SACSCOC policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges."

Procedure Two:

Substantive changes requiring an institution to notify the President of SACSCOC prior to implementation by the institution. Details on which substantive changes require the university to follow Procedure Two are available in SACSCOC policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges."

Procedure Three:

Substantive change requiring an institution to submit a teach-out plan to SACSCOC for approval. Details on which substantive changes require the university to follow Procedure Three are available in SACSCOC policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges" Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.

Provost:

The Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison:

An individual assigned by the university to act as liaison between the university and SACSCOC.

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?

Substantive Change:

A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes:

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control or ownership of the institution
- 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
- The addition of courses or programs at a degree or credential level above that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation.
- A change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- 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
- The establishment of a branch campus.
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree program or a joint degree program with another institution
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution

- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
- 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

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. 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. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

4. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all substantive changes as defined herein. It applies to all university officers who initiate, review, approve and/or allocate resources to any substantive changes, including those to academic and non-academic programs and activities.

Within academic areas, substantive changes under this policy may originate with individuals or groups of faculty members, academic unit committees, academic unit chairs, deans and associate deans, college committees, vice provosts, the provost, or any area reporting to the provost. In those areas outside the Division of Academic Affairs, substantive changes may arise in individual units, among supervisors in each area, executive management teams within vice presidential or executive director areas, or with the vice presidents themselves.

Additionally, a substantive change may be proposed by the president or those in his direct reporting line.

5. POLICY

As the university pursues structural and programmatic changes, all of those changes deemed to be "substantive" changes require approval by the president, Board of Visitors and SACSCOC. The university will follow the substantive change procedures of SACSCOC and inform SACSCOC of such changes and proposed changes in accord with those procedures. Regardless of the origination point, all substantive changes must be tracked and reported under this policy.

6. PROCEDURES

6.1. Decision of Substantive Change Status

6.1.0 At the earliest stage of conceptualization, any proposed change that fits the definition of a substantive change must be submitted in writing via the applicable reporting line to the appropriate vice president. If the vice president approves of the changes, the submission will be forwarded to the president. These submissions must include:

1. The title of the proposed change
2. A brief description of the change, including its scope
3. The responsible individual to act as contact concerning the change
4. A tentative timeline for approval of the change
5. The earliest date possible for implementation of the change.

Preliminary submissions received by the president will be reviewed by the senior leadership team.

6.1.1 The section "Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change" on page 6 of "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges" lists the types of institutional changes which are considered to be substantive under the terms of this policy and the reporting procedure to be used in notifying SACSCOC. More details are provided in "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges."

6.2. Internal Development of Substantive Change

6.2.1 If the proposed change is considered appropriate for internal development by the senior leadership team, the provost will instruct the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to record in the SACSCOC Change Tracking Database information regarding the change description, procedure being followed, and anticipated dates of submission and implementation.

6.2.2 Individuals responsible for the proposed changes will make progress reports to the provost and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison regarding the progress of the proposed change.

6.2.3 The anticipated earliest date of implementation will be recorded to ensure that adequate time exists for SACSCOC notification, including the development of the appropriate supporting documentation. Should the planned implementation date not allow for timely SACSCOC notification, the implementation date will be adjusted to allow for timely notification to SACS.

6.2.4 The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, in coordination with the provost, will monitor and record the progress and outcomes of the proposed change in the SACSCOC Change Tracking Database, including events associated with the university's established policies and procedures for internal and external review and approval for various changes at the university. Working with other university officers, the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will ensure that progress toward approval and implementation is carefully tracked.

6.2.5 For curricular changes, the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs will work with the Accreditation Liaison to keep the provost apprised regarding the continuing viability and progress toward implementation of the potential change to ensure timely notification to SACSCOC. The provost will oversee the process of preparing appropriate notification, in conjunction with those involved with the change, according to the requirements in SACSCOC policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges."

6.2.6 When all internal reviews and approvals have been obtained, the president will send SACSCOC the appropriate written notification of the proposed change.

6.2.7 Depending on the type of change and subsequent instructions from SACSCOC, the university may be required by the COC to submit appropriate documentation in advance of implementation of the change.

6.3. External Development of Substantive Change

When the university's Board of Visitors, SCHEV or the Virginia Governor's office have given final approval, as appropriate, the provost will notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison to prepare for

SACSCOC the appropriate documentation based on the required procedure. Implementation of the approved substantive change may not occur until the procedures have been completed. The provost and SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will post information regarding this policy, associated resources available from SACS/COC and answers to frequently asked questions on the university curriculum Web site (www.jmu.edu/curriculum).

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs:

The provost is responsible for communication between the senior leadership team and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison regarding potential substantive change.

SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison:

In the years between accreditation reviews, the liaison is responsible for ensuring the timely submission of annual institutional profiles and other reports as requested by the Commission. With the chief executive officer, the liaison is responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted to the commission and for ensuring ongoing compliance with Commission standards, policies, and procedures beyond reaffirmation. During the Reaffirmation Cycle, the liaison serves on the SACSCOC Reaffirmation Leadership Team and oversees all staffing aspects of the reaffirmation process. The liaison is responsible for internal and external monitoring of substantive change progress, and responsible for reporting final change status.

Vice Provost for Academic Programs:

The Vice Provost for Academic Programs is responsible for working with development of curricular changes resulting in substantive changes.

Vice Presidents:

The vice presidents are responsible for their respective areas bringing forward any potential substantive changes under this policy.

President:

The president, with the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison, is responsible for the accuracy of all information submitted to SACSCOC and for ensuring ongoing compliance with SACSCOC standards, policies, and procedures beyond reaffirmation. The president is responsible for oversight and final reporting of substantive changes to SACSCOC.

8. SANCTIONS

Sanctions will be commensurate with the severity and/or frequency of the offense and may include termination of employment.

9. EXCLUSIONS

None.

10. INTERPRETATION

The authority to interpret this policy rests with the president and is generally delegated to the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Previous version: April 2012
Approved by the President: August 2010