

UNIVERSITY *of* HOUSTON  
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**SECTION: Academic Affairs**  
**AREA: Academic Programs**

**Number: 12.03.02**

<b>SUBJECT: Substantive Change in Academic Programs</b>
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I. PURPOSE

In order to ensure that all Academic Programs offered through the University of Houston are in compliance with the regional accreditation requirements, the University of Houston and its respective colleges are required to adhere to the policies and procedures as set forth in this document.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

The Southern Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) has a substantive change policy that is driven by U.S. Department of Education regulations. Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion in the nature and scope of an accredited institution as described in Sections III A-C. The types of substantive change and the procedures for addressing them appropriately may be found in the Commission's [policy on substantive change](#) and related materials on the SACS [website](#).

III. PROCEDURES

- A. If a department, school, or college is contemplating changes at the **Program/Course Level** that would:
1. Expand significantly a current degree program;
  2. Add courses or programs that would represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery from those currently offered;
  3. Initiate programs or courses offered through a contractual agreement or consortium;
  4. Change significantly the length of a program;
  5. Initiate degree completion programs; or
  6. Initiate programs at the associate degree level;

the university may have to notify and/or obtain approval from SACS-COC before the change can be implemented. Additional information can be provided by the University of Houston's SACS-COC Accreditation Liaison.

- B. If a department, school, or college is contemplating changes at the **School/College/Department Level** that would result in:
1. Initiating an off-campus site;
  2. Initiating distance learning; and/or
  3. Adding significant changes in existing technology-based delivery systems in distance learning;

the university may have to notify and/or obtain approval from SACS-COC before the change can be implemented. Additional information can be provided by the University of Houston's SACS-COC Accreditation Liaison.

- C. If the university is contemplating one of the following **Institutional Level** changes:
1. Initiating a branch campus;
  2. Initiating a merger/consolidation;
  3. Initiating any change in the established mission of the institution;
  4. Relocating a main campus;
  5. Initiating any change of legal status, governance, form of control, or ownership of the institution; and/or
  6. Closing an institution/program and initiating a teach-out agreement;

the university may have to notify and/or obtain approval from SACS-COC before the change can be implemented. Additional information can be provided by the University of Houston's SACS-COC Accreditation Liaison.

- D. Reporting of substantive changes to SACS-COC must be completed in accordance with established timelines based upon the nature of the proposed change. Timelines for reporting may be found in the SACS-COC [policy on substantive change](#). Furthermore, any contemplated changes must be completed for review by the SACS-COC Accreditation Liaison and the Office of Academic Affairs at least three months prior to the deadlines established by SACS-COC for notification and approval.

- E. The President of the University of Houston will notify the President of the SACS-COC at least 6 months prior to implementation (12 months for changes in degree level) of the substantive change. The letter will include the proposed change, anticipated start date, locations of off-campus sites, and other relevant details.
  
- F. The SACS-COC may authorize an on-site committee visit within 6 months from the start date for any substantive change for the following:
  - 1. The initiation of an off-campus site at which a student can earn 50% or more of the credits in an educational program (note: If an institution has more than 3 approved off-campus sites and has demonstrated effective oversight of off-campus locations, a visit may be delayed until the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the decennial review;
  - 2. The initiation of a branch campus;
  - 3. The initiation of a change in governance or ownership;
  - 4. The initiation of a merger or consolidation;
  - 5. The initiation of courses or degrees at a more advanced level; and
  - 6. Instances where an on-site visit is needed for in-depth evaluation beyond what is covered in the prospectus.

**IV. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Responsible Party: Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Review: Every three years, on or before June 1

**V. APPROVAL**

John J. Antel  
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Renu Khator  
President

Date of President's Approval: January 13, 2010