

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Effective Date: March 2013; updated September 2015

Policy Location: College Policy Manual

As a condition of retaining its regional accreditation, Centenary College is required to notify the Centenary College of Louisiana Board of Trustees and the SACSCOC of any substantive change at the institution. Because failure to do so could result in the loss of accreditation, the College has established the following policy and procedures for identifying and reporting substantive changes. The SACSCOC defines substantive change as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution” (*Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions*, July 2014). The types of substantive changes identified by the SACSCOC and cited in federal regulations (34 CFR 602.22) are included in Table 1.

COLLEGE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Preparation for and approval of each type of substantive change shall occur at various levels on campus and shall follow the appropriate guidelines and approval processes set forth in the College’s governance documents (including College By-Laws and Constitution, Academic Regulations Handbook, Faculty Handbook, Staff Handbook, and Student Handbook, see References). Vice-Presidents, Department Chairs, Deans, and Directors of academic and non-academic units are expected to:

- be familiar with the SACSCOC’s definition of substantive change;
- be aware of related resources and information (see <http://www.centenary.edu/provost> and <http://www.sacscoc.org>);
- inform the College’s Accreditation Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the College, and
- provide necessary data and information to comply with SACSCOC policy.

In accordance with their program approval responsibilities, the Planning and Policy Advisory Council (PPAC) and the Academic Policy Council (APC) shall maintain program approval procedures that:

- 1) recognize and report substantive changes related to on-campus academic programs;
- 2) require approval by the appropriate College entities and also include any recommendations offered by the corresponding Vice-President, Department Chair, Dean, Director, and/or the Provost prior to approval of academic substantive change; and
- 3) provide for timely notification to SACSCOC prior to change implementation.

Any proposal to implement a substantive change at the College must be submitted to PPAC and/or APC, as appropriate, at least 60 days prior to the deadline for SACSCOC notification and/or approval.

The College’s Accreditation Liaison shall notify appropriate individuals of any changes in the SACSCOC substantive change policy. As needed, the Liaison will attend meetings of the Planning and Policy Advisory Council and the Academic Policy Council to provide information about and updates to the SACSCOC substantive change policy. The Liaison shall prepare the President’s notification to the SACSCOC regarding the substantive changes that are reported. If a prospectus is required by the SACSCOC, the appropriate Department Chairs, Deans, Directors, or appropriate senior administrators shall coordinate preparation of the prospectus and forward the prospectus to the Accreditation Liaison for final review. The Accreditation Liaison shall review a required prospectus and obtain approval from the President and the Provost before preparing for submission to SACSCOC by the President. No changes will be implemented until the College receives the appropriate communication back from the SACSCOC.

Table 1. Types of Substantive Changes and Reporting Protocol

Type of Change	NOTIFICATION of SACSCOC prior to implementation is required	Time Frame for Notifying SACSCOC	APPROVAL by SACSCOC prior to implementation is required	Documentation Required
ACADEMIC				
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	NA	NA	Yes	Application for Level Change; Due: April 8 or September 15
Expanding at current degree level (significant departure from current program)	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program <i>using existing approved courses</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA
Initiating a certificate program <i>at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)</i>	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program <i>that is a significant departure from previously approved programs</i>	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution, including where <i>the joint programs are with another SACSCOC accredited institution</i>	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
Initiating joint or dual degrees with another institution, including where <i>the joint programs are with an institution not accredited by SACSCOC</i>	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Dual Programs	Yes	Prior to Implementation	No	Copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution
Initiating off-campus sites where <i>students can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program</i>	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating off-campus sites where <i>students can obtain 25-49 percent of credit</i>	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of Notification
Initiating off-campus sites where <i>students can obtain 24 percent or less</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites <i>that are significantly</i>	NA	NA	NA	NA

<i>different from current programs at the site but not at the institution</i>				
Initiating distance learning where 50 percent or more of a program is offered distance for the first time	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating distance learning where 25-49 percent is offered distance	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
Initiating distance learning where 24 percent or less is offered distance	NA	NA	NA	NA
Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement
Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs where the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the COC accredited institution	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs where the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the accredited institution	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Copy of the signed agreement
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	NA	NA	Yes	Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency, and other pertinent information
Altering significantly the length of a program	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating degree completion programs	NA	NA	Yes	Prospectus
Closing a program where the institution will teach out its own students	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
Closing a program where the institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement detailing terms included with notification
ADMINISTRATIVE				
Initiating a branch campus	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus

Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution	NA	NA	Yes	Contact Commission Staff
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus; Due: April 8 or September 15
Relocating a main or branch campus	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus; Due: April 8 or September 15
Closing an approved off-campus site, branch campus, or the institution where <i>the institution will teach out its own students</i>	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
Closing an approved off-campus site, branch campus, or the institution where <i>the institution contracts with another institution to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)</i>	Yes	Immediately following decision to close	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement detailing terms included with notification
Acquiring any program or site from another institution	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	Yes	Prior to implementation	NA	Letter of notification with new address and starting date

A glossary of terms and procedures for reporting regarding substantive changes are available in the SACSCOC Policy Statement, *Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges* (<http://www.sacscoc.org>).

References:

By-Laws of Centenary College of Louisiana. (February 2009).

Centenary College of Louisiana, *Academic Regulations Handbook*.
http://www.centenary.edu/provost/academic_handbook

Centenary College of Louisiana, *Faculty Handbook*. <http://www.centenary.edu/provost/handbook>

Centenary College of Louisiana, *Personnel Policy Manual*. <http://www.centenary.edu/hr/manual>

Centenary College of Louisiana, *Student Handbook*. <http://www.centenary.edu/handbook>

Restated Charter of Centenary College of Louisiana. (October 20, 2011).

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, *The Principles of Accreditation*. (2012). <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions*. (July 2014).
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>