

## **Substantive Change Policy and Procedures**

Tennessee Wesleyan University (TWU) reports all substantive change to Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College (SACSCOC) within an appropriate timeframe as defined and mandated within the published SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions Policy Statement (<https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>).

### **Definition of Substantive Change (per SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions Policy Statement)**

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services. SACSCOC accredits an entire institution. Accreditation extends to all programs and services of an institution wherever located and however delivered. SACSCOC does not accredit individual programs, locations, or portions of an institution. However, some new programs, locations, and other institutional changes are subject to notification and/or approval as defined in *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*.

### **Compliance**

Substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- Substantially changing the established mission or objectives of an institution or its programs.
- Changing the legal status, form of control, or ownership of an institution.
- Changing the governance of an institution.
- Merging / consolidating two or more institutions or entities.
- Acquiring another institution or any program or location of another institution.
- Relocating an institution or an off-campus instructional site of an institution (including a branch campus).
- Offering courses or programs at a higher or lower degree level than currently authorized.
- Adding graduate programs at an institution previously offering only undergraduate programs (including degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other for-credit credential).
- Changing the way an institution measures student progress, whether in clock hours or credit-hours; semesters, trimesters, or quarters; or time-based or non-time-based methods or measures.
- Adding a program that is a significant departure from the existing programs, or method of delivery, from those offered when the institution was last evaluated.
- Initiating programs by distance education or correspondence courses.
- Adding an additional method of delivery to a currently offered program.
- Entering into a cooperative academic arrangement.
- Entering into a written arrangement under 34 C.F.R. § 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV Higher Education Act (HEA) programs offers less than 25% (notification) or 25-50% (approval) of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs. An agreement offering more than 50% of one or more of an institution's programs is prohibited by federal regulation.
- Substantially increase or decreasing the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded or competencies demonstrated, or an increase in the level of credential awarded, for successful completion of one or more programs.
- Adding competency-based education programs.
- Adding each competency-based education program by direct assessment.

- Adding programs with completion pathways that recognize and accommodate a student’s prior or existing knowledge or competency.
- Awarding dual or joint academic awards.
- Re-opening a previously closed program or off-campus instructional site.
- Adding a new off-campus instructional site/additional location including a branch campus.
- Adding a permanent location at a site at which an institution is conducting a teach-out program for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- Closing an institution, a program, a method of delivery, an off-campus instructional site, or a program at an off-campus instructional site.
- Participating in the federal Prison Education Program providing Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated students.

Other substantive changes, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing substantive change.
- An institution is responsible for maintaining compliance at all times with Standard 14.2 (Substantive change) of the *Principles of Accreditation* and with the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* and related policies, viz.,
  - *Advertising and Student Recruitment;*
  - *Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards;*
  - *Credit Hours;*
  - *Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs;*
  - *Distance and Correspondence Education;*
  - *Dual Enrollment;*
  - *Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status;*
  - *Request for a Period of Noncompliance;* and
  - *Seeking Accreditation at a Higher or Lower Degree Level.*
- An institution is required to have a written substantive change policy and procedure. It must be approved through institutional processes and published in institutional documents accessible to those affected and to the public. The purpose of the institution’s substantive change policy and procedure is to ensure all substantive changes are reported to SACSCOC in a timely fashion as required by *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures*. Institutions are responsible for implementing and enforcing their substantive change policy and procedure.
- An institution’s fiscal and administrative capability to operate off-campus instructional sites is assessed when a new site is reviewed for approval and as part of decennial and fifth-year interim reviews.
- A new off-campus instructional site is subject to a substantive change committee visit. A committee visit, when necessary, is authorized when a site is approved. The committee visit ensures the site has the personnel, facilities, and resources identified by an institution in its application or prospectus and ensures the quality of instructional and support services offered at the site.
- Different or additional requirements apply to an institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION. Restriction applies if an institution has been placed on Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause over the prior three academic years, or if an institution is under provisional certification for participation in federal financial aid programs.
- An institution is required to submit an institutional contingency teach-out plan to SACSCOC within 30 days of notification if the institution is placed or continued on Probation or Probation for Good Cause, or if the institution meets conditions enumerated in the procedures section of this policy originating from the U.S. Department of Education or state authority.
- Numerous changes: Numerous substantive changes may accelerate an institution’s next reaffirmation of accreditation. Accelerated reaffirmation may be triggered by, but not limited to,
  - a significant change in the number of off-campus instructional sites including branch campuses,
  - a significant change in the number of programs,
  - a significant change in enrollment, and

- frequent mergers/consolidations or acquisitions.

### Non-compliance

If an institution is non-compliant with Substantive Change Policy and Procedures or Standard 14.2 (Substantive change), its accreditation may be in jeopardy. An unreported substantive change may require a review of the institution's substantive change policy and procedures document by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Non-compliance subjects the institution to monitoring, sanction, or removal from membership. Failure to secure approval, if required, of a substantive change involving programs or locations that qualify for title IV federal funding may place the institution in jeopardy with the U.S. Department of Education, including reimbursement of funds received related to an unreported substantive change. For additional information, refer to Appendix A, Standards and Policy Addressing Unreported Substantive Change, in Substantive Change Policy and Procedures

### TWU Procedures and Responsibilities for Compliance

1. The Institutional Accreditation Liaison (IAC) will serve as a member of the following committees in order to monitor the need for timely notification or reporting to SACSCOC: Curriculum and Policy Committee, Strategic Planning, and any other ad hoc committees as needed.
2. The IAC will regularly engage with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the President's Cabinet, as needed, to address changes to the mission of the University, to any instructional sites, to consortium memberships, or to agreements with other institutions.
3. The IAC will annually review the SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions Policy Statement for revisions and present a summary of any changes to the President's Cabinet. Any resulting revisions necessary to the TWU Substantive Change Policy Statement will then be discussed and approved by the President's Cabinet and then Curriculum and Policy Committee.
4. Members of the President's Cabinet will annually review the SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions Policy Statement and the TWU Substantive Change Policy Statement with appropriate staff members within respective areas. The IAC will present the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures Statement to any appropriate party upon recommendation from any member of the President's Cabinet.
5. The IAC will regularly report the status of SACSCOC decisions to the President's Cabinet. The members of the President's Cabinet will then notify appropriate parties within their divisions in order to report any relevant changes to state, regional, or program accrediting agencies and the Department of Education.
6. Since the reporting of substantive changes to SACSCOC falls within the responsibilities of the IAC, upon consideration of any change that may fall within the purview of the SACSCOC Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions Policy Statement, TWU staff or faculty members will consult the IAC in order to determine whether the change does indeed meet the definition of a substantive change as outlined by SACSCOC. If further consultation is necessary, the SACSCOC staff will be contacted for clarification. Any substantive change initiated by TWU will then be reported within the appropriate timeframe and procedure as outlined by the most recent SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.

The TWU Substantive Change Policy and procedures Statement is posted on the TWU website for public access (<https://www.tnwesleyan.edu/about/departments/institutional-effectiveness-research/policies/>) as well as on the TWU intranet site for employees' access ([https://portal.tnwesleyan.edu/ICS/Employee\\_Info/OIER\\_Resources.inz?portlet=Resources&screen=MainView&screenType=next](https://portal.tnwesleyan.edu/ICS/Employee_Info/OIER_Resources.inz?portlet=Resources&screen=MainView&screenType=next)).

Approved by President's Cabinet: 02.25.2014

Approved by Curriculum & Policy Committee: 01.01.2014

Updated (Name Change): 01.08.2018

Approved by President's Cabinet: 07.09.2019

Curriculum & Policy Committee: 07.26.2019

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Approved by President's Cabinet: 01.19.2021  
Approved by Curriculum & Policy Committee: 01.28.2021  
Approved by President's Cabinet: 08.17.2021  
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