

## University of West Georgia

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### *Approval process for substantive changes to academic programs*

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As the University of West Georgia fulfills its mission, improvements in academic programs are essential. As such, modifications to current academic programs, and implementation of new academic programs are likely to increase.

This document outlines the internal approval process for planning and implementing substantive changes to academic programs. This process maintains the institution's compliance with University of West Georgia, Board of Regents, and SACS Commission on Colleges notification and approval processes regarding substantive changes in academic programs.

For this document, the following definitions are adopted:

*Academic program: A degree, certificate or any other credential that is noted on the transcript.*

*Substantive Change to an Academic Program: A new academic program, the redirection of the curriculum of an academic program, the deactivation or termination of an academic program.*

***Prior to implementing any substantive change, all approvals (both internal and external) must be received by the office of the Provost.***

#### **What is a substantive change?**

*A substantive change for a individual program is defined by the Board of Regents as: "Curricular changes involve the substantive redirection of an academic program which has been precipitated by national norms, disciplinary norms, accreditation requirements for continued good standing, and other factors attributable to strengthening degrees and majors."\**

[http://www.usg.edu/academic\\_programs/changes/types\\_of\\_substantive\\_change\\_program\\_modification/](http://www.usg.edu/academic_programs/changes/types_of_substantive_change_program_modification/)

*Substantive change to offer a degree program externally—"The Board of Regents recognizes two categories of external offerings: off-campus instruction and distance education. Off-campus instruction is defined as traditional face-to-face classroom instruction that occurs at a location away from the home premises of the institution. Distance education is defined as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place and the instruction is delivered using technology..."*

[http://www.usg.edu/academic\\_programs/external/external\\_degree\\_proposal\\_criteria/](http://www.usg.edu/academic_programs/external/external_degree_proposal_criteria/)

*A substantive change as defined by SACSCOC is: “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes...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 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”\**

*Copied from the SACSCOC policy: “SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE FOR SACSCOC ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS” edited July 2016*

*\*These definitions are “soft” in the sense that their application and interpretation are in the hands of a specific reviewer.*

### **What are the external approval requirements for a substantive change?**

*Board of Regents Reporting and Approval Requirements: “A change in the curriculum, as defined above, “requires Board approval and generally depicts how the program has been revised to ensure that students receive content instruction that is conducive to successful outcomes.”*

[http://www.usg.edu/academic\\_programs/changes/types\\_of\\_substantive\\_change\\_program\\_modification/](http://www.usg.edu/academic_programs/changes/types_of_substantive_change_program_modification/)

*“The designation of an off-campus instructional location as a campus, center, or consortium requires approval by the Board of Regents...Institutions wishing to offer degree programs externally (off-campus or at a distance) must first submit an external degree proposal to the University System Chief Academic Officer & Executive Vice Chancellor.”*

[http://www.usg.edu/academic\\_programs/external/external\\_degree\\_proposal\\_criteria/](http://www.usg.edu/academic_programs/external/external_degree_proposal_criteria/)

*SACSCOC Reporting Requirements and Timeline: SACSCOC requires notification and/or approval for a substantive change **prior to implementation**.*

*All internal approvals (Department, College, Faculty Senate, and Provost) must be received before a request for Board of Regents approval is submitted. Board of Regents approval must be received before a request for SACSCOC approval is submitted.*

**Typical lead time for Board of Regents notification and approval is 1-2 months. Typical lead time for SACSCOC notification is 3 months. Typical lead time for SACSCOC approval is 3-12 months.**

### **People, Duties, and Responsibilities**

*Program Director/Department Chair:* It is the responsibility of the Program Director/Department Chair to assure that all required approvals and notifications are received prior to scheduling or marketing courses or programs which will require a substantive change. Each Program Director should keep on file a copy of the Board or Regents and SACSCOC approval for each program and each location where that program is offered (including online).

*Dean's Office:* It is the responsibility of the Dean's office to assure that no substantive change is implemented without the prior approval of the program through the internal and external processes outlined in this document.

*Office of the Provost (including SACSCOC Liaison):* It is the responsibility of the VPAA's office and the SACSCOC Liaison to manage the approval process and assure approvals and notifications are completed between UWG, the Board of Regents, and SACSCOC. It is the responsibility of the VPAA's office to maintain a set of all records related to the approvals of substantive changes in degree programs and certificates. It is the responsibility of the VPAA's office to maintain a list of all substantive changes that are being planned and in process and to keep the Deans' offices informed of the status of external approvals.

### **Internal Planning and Approval Process for Substantive Changes**

Substantive changes are initiated through the process of planning at the BOR, University, College/School, and Department levels. When a substantive change is being considered, the planning process is initiated by the Department Chair/Program Director working in conjunction with the College Dean's office.

*It is the responsibility of the Dean's office to notify the office of the VPAA at the time planning process begins, normally 12-18 months before a substantive change implementation is planned.*

### **Compliance Checks**

*Registrar:* Each semester the Registrar will circulate to the Dean's office of each college/school a list of all distance and off campus site course offerings. This will occur following the start of classes.

*Dean's Offices:* Each semester the Dean's office of each college and school will review the report by the Registrar's office to assure compliance with substantive change policies. Should a program desire to receive approval to offer a degree program online or off site, the Dean's

office will work with the Department Chair/Program Director to initiate the approval process outlined below.

*Extended Degree Programs:* Each semester, the department of Extended Degree programs will monitor off campus-locations and online courses and provide feedback to the Dean's offices of each college/school regarding off-campus and online offerings.

## **University of West Georgia**

### ***Substantive Change Planning and Approval Guide (New and Existing Academic Programs)***

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A substantive change to an academic program is initiated with the Department Chair/Program Director working in conjunction with the College/School Dean's office.

*It is the responsibility of the Dean's office working in conjunction with the Department Chair/Program Director to assure that program planning and approvals are complete prior to implementing the substantive change.*

**Step 1:** When a substantive change to an academic program is being considered, the College/School Dean's office and/or the Department Chair/Program Director should collect the information necessary to submit the substantive change through the UWG Course/Program Submission System. Any questions regarding the information to include should be directed to the office of the Provost.

**Step 2:** The Department Chair/Program Director prepares the necessary prospectus or gathers the necessary information and submits it through the UWG Course/Program Submission System.

**Step 3:** The proposed change navigates the approval process as programmed into the UWG Course/Program Submission System including review and approvals at each of the following levels: College, Faculty Senate (GPC, UPC), Provost, BOR, SACSCOC, specialized accreditation (if required).

**Step 4:** Once received, all approvals are circulated to the Dean's office from the office of the Provost. Approvals are also uploaded into the UWG assessment system database.

### **Implementation Phase**

Once all approvals have been received, classes can be scheduled for the substantive change and marketing of the new program or changed program can begin. Marketing can begin prior to

SACSCOC approval only when the phrase, “pending SACSCOC approval” appears on all marketing materials.