

## Frequently Asked Substantive Change Questions

### Why is SACSCOC concerned about curricular modification or expansion?

It is important for the SACSCOC to understand how our institution is evolving and growing by:

- Reviewing proposed changes in terms of the institutional mission,
- Considering the impact of change on existing programs,
- Determining whether the institution has sufficient resources to implement the change, and
- Evaluating the soundness of the proposed change.

### Why does the University need to report new certificate programs?

- Any program that leads to a credential (certificate, diploma, degree) is part of the institution's accreditation.
- If the certificate is in an area where the institution does not currently have a program or is significantly different from existing programs, it must be reported.
- It is important for the institution to report changes in program, since federal dollars for student financial aid are tied to approval of substantive changes.

### What is a "significant departure" from existing programs?

The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure either in content, expertise, or method of delivery from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated.

Expanding program offerings at the current credential level may be a substantive change depending on what other, related, approved programs are currently offered. Our institution's experience with the content (similar program(s) or set of courses in the curriculum, graduation of several classes with the similar program or courses, etc.) is a factor that impacts whether this change is "new" content for the institution.

Ultimately, we must answer:

*Do we have enough existing **expertise** and **experience** teaching this/or very similar **content**, and the resources to deliver it, such that we are 95-99% percent sure the new program will provide a high-quality learning experience for your students without more extensive planning and reflection?*

### When is a course "new?"

- Special topics courses that are made into permanent courses **are** considered "new." Courses not in a previous year's catalog **are** considered "new." Also, courses **are** "new" if significant changes in content are made and these changes are not closely related to content in other programs.

## Frequently Asked Substantive Change Questions

### **If program or course revisions result in a change to the number of credits required to graduate, does this require SACSCOC notification or approval?**

SACSCOC approval is required **prior** to implementation if:

- Program credit hours increase or decrease by 25% or more, **AND**
- Students' expected time to completion increases or decreases by more than one term or its equivalent.

### **Must I have UNC System approval before preparing a SACSCOC document?**

- No. A UNC System proposal and a SACSCOC prospectus may be prepared in parallel for degree programs.

### **Am I able to enroll students before SACSCOC approval?**

- No. Programs must be approved by SACSCOC before students may enroll.
- However, you may **recruit** students but they may **not** be “conditionally accepted” prior to SACSCOC approval.

### **Am I able to advertise a program before SACSCOC approval?**

- Yes. But any communication must include the disclaimer “contingent upon SACSCOC approval.”

### **Am I able to offer a program at a new off-site location without SACSCOC approval?**

- Yes, if the classes offered at that location provide less than 25% of the total course credits in the program.

### **Am I able to offer more programs at a site without SACSCOC approval?**

- Yes, if each additional program is previously approved and the percentage of course credits is at the same level or lower for which the site is approved.

### **What are program changes that are not significant departures?**

- Program and course name changes, offering existing programs at approved off-sites,
- CIP code changes that are administrative in nature, administrative structure changes,
- Delivery of online instruction if initially approved at 50%, and
- On-going curriculum development, unless it includes new programs or courses that are new to the institution.

### **Does Continuing Education require SACSCOC approval?**

- No. Continuing education does not fall under the purview of substantive change.