



Substantive Change Policy

Introduction

Substantive change is defined as a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. 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.
- 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 which an entity 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.
- Increasing 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.

Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC) must notify the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of potential or actual substantive change in a timely fashion, and in many cases must receive approval for such change from the Commission before the initiative is implemented.

SACSCOC is required by the federal government to monitor its constituents' compliance with the substantive change policy and to grant permission for major changes to occur. In order to ensure GNTC's compliance, anyone proposing to change the program listing or implement other major initiatives should review the substantive change policy for GNTC as well as the relevant portion of the SACSCOC website.

Institutional Responsibility

Georgia Northwestern Technical College is responsible for compliance with the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy as a condition of its continued accreditation. SACSCOC defines substantive change as "a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution." Substantive changes may include, but are not limited to, 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; establishing a new site at which students can earn 50% or more of the credits toward a GNTC program and online (distance learning) delivery of 50% or more of an educational program.

Other substantive change requirements, including those required by federal regulations, include:

- An institution is required to notify or secure SACSCOC approval prior to implementing a 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.

- 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. 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.

The GNTC Substantive Change policy is published on GNTC's Intranet (GNET) under Institutional Effectiveness. In addition, the vice president of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success shares the policy and/or any changes to the policy as needed with the college administrators.

Administrative Responsibility

The president, vice presidents, associate vice president, deans, and directors have the fundamental responsibility to be generally aware of the substantive change policy, inform GNTC's SACSCOC Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals that may be considered a substantive change for the college, and provide the SACSCOC Liaison with any data, information, or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC policy when requested.

The president, or designee, is responsible for notifying the Commission of any substantive changes. The president must review and sign all substantive change notification letters.

SACSCOC Liaison Responsibility

The current SACSCOC Liaison for Georgia Northwestern Technical College is:

[Kristen Kinsey](#)

Director of Institutional Effectiveness

Floyd County Campus

(706) 295-6863

Every SACSCOC member institution has an accreditation liaison whose charge is to ensure compliance with accreditation requirements. Responsibilities include:

- Provide the president, vice presidents, associate vice president, deans, and directors with information about the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy. This includes, but is not limited to, maintaining a section of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness section of GNET concerning substantive change.
- Provide a list of examples of substantive change on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness GNET site.
- Work with the president, vice presidents, associate vice president, deans, and directors to determine whether a proposed change is substantive.
- Determine what action with respect to SACSCOC is needed when a change is substantive.
- File the appropriate notice or prospectus with SACSCOC.
- If the Commission requires the institution to write a prospectus or prepare additional documentation beyond the notification letter, the accreditation liaison, with assistance from the other areas, is responsible for preparing the documentation and for organizing any onsite substantive change committee visits. Additional committees can also be organized to assist in these tasks.
- Coordinate with SACSCOC and the president, vice president, associate vice presidents, deans, and directors about any required follow-up action.

Online Learning Team Responsibility

The GNTC Online Learning Team was formed out of a need to monitor the number, type, and quality of online courses. The Online Learning Team is charged with the following:

- Monitoring the percentage of credit courses in any degree, diploma, or certificate program offered via online learning to ensure institutional compliance with SACSCOC policies and regularly updating (at least once per academic year) the SACSCOC Liaison of online course status with regard to percentage of program available online.
- Ensuring that any course offered online, whether fully online, hybrid, or web-enhanced, is the equivalent of the same traditional classroom course in terms of course competencies, course learning outcomes, and course material.
- Ensuring that there is evidence of collaboration among program chairs, traditional classroom instructors, and instructors of online courses in determining course materials.
- Ensuring that resources available for online courses are the equivalent of resources available to students in traditional classroom courses.
- Making recommendations to program chairs, deans, curriculum coordinator, or the Vice President of Academic Affairs on faculty development needs related to online teaching and learning.

Procedure and Time of Notification

The SACSCOC guidelines for reporting substantive change, as specified in the Commission's document Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges, are the fundamental resource for reporting substantive change and for planning reporting.

Notification to SACSCOC Liaison of Proposed Changes

If a change is substantive, SACSCOC must be notified as much as 12 months in advance of implementing the change. GNTC must provide written notification of the change to the Commission. Upon becoming aware of a proposed change that may be substantive, the president, vice presidents, associate vice president, deans, or the directors of the division/department proposing the change should notify the SACSCOC Liaison utilizing the SACSCOC Checklist.

Late Notification to SACSCOC Liaison

If it is discovered that a program that may be considered a substantive change has been implemented without notification of the SACSCOC Liaison, the president, vice presidents, associate vice president, deans, or the directors of the division/department has responsibility to notify the SACSCOC Liaison immediately. It is then the responsibility of the SACSCOC Liaison to notify SACSCOC as provided in the SACSCOC Policy.

References

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, The Principles of Accreditation, 14.2 (2017)

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges,
Substantive Change Policy and Procedures
[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)

Appendix A

Georgia Northwestern Technical College Substantive Change Checklist

Please mark all that apply. 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.
- ☐ 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 which an entity 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.
- ☐ Increasing 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.

Please provide a brief description of proposed change (please include program, site, anticipated implementation date, etc.)

Signature

Date