

# SAP 03.02.99.T0.01 Substantive Change Approval Procedure



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Revised: February 27, 2017  
Revised: March 13, 2020  
Revised: November 17, 2025  
Next Scheduled Review: November 17, 2030

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## Procedure Statement

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Tarleton State University (Tarleton) will be proactive in ensuring all instances of substantive change are reported in a timely manner as required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The complete SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement can be found online at <https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>. The administrative heads of both academic and non-academic units are responsible for being attentive to what SACSCOC considers a substantive change and for being aware of related information resources concerning accreditation.

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## Reason for Procedure

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This Standard Administrative Procedure (SAP) is designed to ensure that Tarleton monitors and responds appropriately to any proposed modification of the essential characteristics of the university that constitutes a substantive change under SACSCOC and to notify SACSCOC of any such changes in a timely manner. The faculty and staff are obliged to assist with recognizing and reporting such substantive changes as set out in this SAP.

Failure to report substantive changes can result in sanctions or loss of accreditation. It is the duty of the president, provost, vice presidents, associate and assistant vice presidents, deans, department heads, directors, and other administrators to ensure that the university's institutional accreditation liaison (IAL) is notified of any planning for a modification that may prove substantive according to SACSCOC policy. Additionally, the IAL is required to monitor the systems in place to ensure any planned substantive changes are consistently conducted in accordance with this SAP and the process for identifying and approving substantive changes is followed. Implementation of a change that is clearly substantive cannot occur until the university notifies SACSCOC of its intention and receives approval as needed.

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## Definitions

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**Substantive Change:** According to SACSCOC, substantive change is a "significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution".

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## Procedures and Responsibilities

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### 1. PROCESS

The following steps for determining and reporting substantive change should be adhered to by all faculty and staff at all times:

- 1.1 Faculty or staff considering change will notify the institutional accreditation liaison (IAL) or IAL contacts faculty or staff.
  - 1.1.1 Faculty or staff who are planning a change, such as those listed on the SACSCOC web site at <https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>, are to immediately contact the IAL for further guidance. If the IAL becomes aware of a potential change through committee functions, council meetings, or another avenue of information dissemination, the IAL will contact the faculty or staff involved in the proposed change and provide guidance related to next steps.
- 1.2 The SACSCOC Internal Review Committee determines whether the proposed change constitutes substantive change according to SACSCOC policy.
  - 1.2.1 If the proposed change fits the definition of a substantive change as delineated by SACSCOC policy, the IAL will determine the documentation/type of notification required for submission to the Commission.
  - 1.2.2 If the proposed change is determined to not require SACSCOC notification then documentation will be filed internally to substantiate this decision.
- 1.3 IAL contacts faculty or staff to discuss required documentation.
  - 1.3.1 The liaison works directly with faculty or staff to gather data necessary to complete the documentation required by the Commission.
- 1.4 Documentation prepared by IAL in accordance with SACSCOC policy.

- 1.4.1 The faculty or staff member involved in the change will work in conjunction with the IAL to complete the document so as to meet SACSCOC deadlines for submission.

- 1.5 Documentation submitted to SACSCOC for approval.

- 1.5.1 The IAL will notify/seek approval of the Commission in writing according to SACSCOC preferred methods.

Information on types of changes and required timelines can be found on the SACSCOC website or by contacting IAL. Should SACSCOC choose to modify its substantive change policy, university personnel will be notified via email by the IAL and this SAP will be updated to reflect compliance with SACSCOC policy.

2. TIMELY REPORTING OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

The IAL is responsible for reporting all substantive changes and, therefore, will have a presence on specific governance committees and groups to maintain awareness of proposed changes occurring on campus.

- 2.1. Administrative Curriculum Review Committee

- 2.1.1 The Administrative Curriculum Review Committee is responsible for reviewing curriculum items pertaining to coursework and degree programs and meets on a monthly basis during the academic year. This committee meets at the mid-level of the curriculum approval process, thereby giving the IAL the opportunity to review proposed changes while still in progress through the internal approval cycle.

- 2.2 Academic Council

- 2.2.1 The Academic Council is responsible for reviewing and approving significant changes related to university curriculum and serves as a review and approval body for other academic university functions. The Council meets monthly during the calendar year and is comprised of directors, department heads, Faculty Advisory Council presiding officer, deans, assistant and associate vice, the IAL, and is chaired by the provost.
- 2.2.2 Substantive change items requiring review and approval by Academic Council include:
  - adding new degree programs or changes to existing programs;
  - moving programs to a more advanced level; implementing programs at a distance;
  - initiating and expanding program offerings at off-campus sites;
  - initiating certificate programs; initiating off-campus sites;
  - initiating joint degrees with both SACSCOC accredited and non-accredited institutions;

- initiating dual degree programs;
- cooperative academic arrangements;
- altering significantly the length of a program;
- altering significantly the educational mission of the institution;
- initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium;
- initiating a branch campus;
- initiating degree completion programs;
- closing a program, approving off-campus location, branch campus or institution, whether teaching-out our own students or contracting with another institution to teach-out theirs;
- adding a permanent location at a site where the institution may conduct a teach-out for students from a closing institution; and
- other issues related to curriculum and instruction.

A presence on this council allows the IAL to remain aware of any proposed substantive change of an academic nature under consideration by the university.

## 2.3 Executive Leadership Cabinet

2.3.1 The Executive Leadership Cabinet is comprised of the university president, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, vice president for student affairs, vice president for institutional advancement, vice president for finance and administration, vice president of enrollment management, vice president for intercollegiate athletics, and chief of staff. This group meets weekly during the calendar year and is responsible for:

- reviewing and approving proposed substantive changes related to initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved;
- expanding at current degree level;
- initiating joint degrees with other institutions;
- initiating dual degree programs;
- initiating off-campus sites;
- initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium;
- initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution;
- altering significantly the educational mission of the university;
- changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status;
- initiating an off-campus site or branch campus;
- relocating an off-campus site or branch campus;
- closing an off-campus location, branch campus, or institution;

- acquiring any program or site from another institution;
- adding a permanent location at a teach-out site; and
- other issues related to the administration of the university.

When applicable, the IAL is made aware of potential changes that would be deemed substantive by the Commission and may be invited to Cabinet meetings to discuss said changes.

### 3. PUBLISHING/AWARENESS OF TARLETON'S SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE PROCEDURE

To ensure that university personnel are aware of the substantive change procedure, the following processes are followed:

- 3.1 This SAP is published on the university rules and procedures webpage (<http://www.tarleton.edu/policy/index.html>).
- 3.2 The IAL presents the substantive change procedure with relevant updates to the Academic Council and Executive Leadership Cabinet during the Academic year. Combined, these two entities are comprised of the president, vice-presidents, chief of staff, associate and assistant vice presidents, deans, department heads, and directors.
- 3.3 The IAL visits each academic college during the academic year to present information related to substantive change and other SACSCOC processes to the deans and department heads.
- 3.4 Professional development seminars are conducted annually by the IAL or designee to inform faculty and staff regarding substantive change requirements of the Commission.

By informing and educating all faculty and staff about the SACSCOC substantive change requirements and monitoring planned substantive changes as delineated in this procedure, the university will be proactive in reporting such changes in a timely manner. Any changes to the published procedure will be distributed via email by the IAL to all faculty and staff of the institution.

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## Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

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[System Policy 03.02, Academic Mission Statements and Program Inventory](#)

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy Statement](#)

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## **Contact Office**

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Institutional Accreditation Liaison  
Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Administration  
254.968.9103