

Substantive Change

In support of our mission to “Improve Life through Learning” Isothermal Community College welcomes and encourages the expansion of educational opportunities for the citizens of Rutherford and Polk Counties. Opportunities may be offered through the development of new programs, innovative instructional delivery methods, and program offerings on and off-campus.

In the pursuit of expanding educational opportunities, Isothermal Community College is committed to compliance with all policies and procedures mandated by the Commission on Colleges (COC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), its regional accrediting body.

In the process of expanding new educational opportunities it is possible that proposed modifications and/or new initiatives may deviate significantly from existing programs or conditions, thus affecting the institutional nature and scope. Recognizing that it is the Commission’s responsibility to evaluate the effect of a substantive change on the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the institution, *SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy* requires all accredited institutions, including Isothermal Community College to file a Substantive Change Request prior to implementation.

Failure to comply with this policy may carry severe consequences for the institution as shown under Principle 3.12 of the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, which states: “If an institution fails to follow the Commission’s procedures for notification and approval of substantive changes, its total accreditation may be placed in jeopardy

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

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- 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 change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of 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
- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
- Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs

- Reactivating an educational program or off-campus instructional site that has been inactive but not closed within a five-year period.

Responsibility for notifying SACSCOC of proposed substantive changes rests with the President. The Executive Vice President, working with the SACSCOC Liaison, coordinates and facilitates all procedures guiding the notification and application process.

A complete list of substantive change types and requirements may be found at <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

Department Deans and Directors

Responsible for ensuring that no substantive change is implemented without the prior approval of the program through the internal and external processes. Approval should include but is not limited to: SACSCOC, the North Carolina Community College System, and the Isothermal Community College Curriculum Committee. Specific programs may also have other accrediting bodies that require approval. In such cases it is the department dean or director's responsibility to seek and receive approval prior to the implementation of the substantive change. Department deans and directors are also responsible for ensuring that all required approvals and notifications are received prior to scheduling or marketing courses or programs that will require substantive change. The Executive Vice President and the SACSCOC Liaison should be notified at the time the program planning process begins, normally 12-18 months before a substantive change implementation is sought. Each department dean/director should keep on file copies of substantive change requests, notifications, and SACSCOC approvals for each program, location (off-campus site) and delivery format (online) in which the program is offered.

Director of Financial Aid

Responsible for assessing substantive changes that may require Department of Education (DOE) approval, submitting proposed changes to DOE for approval, keeping the SACSCOC Liaison and Dean of Students updated regarding approval processes, and providing related documentation to be used in appropriate compliance reports and documentation.

Executive Vice President

Responsible for managing the approval process and ensuring that approvals and notifications are completed on time. Responsible for ensuring records related to all substantive change transactions are maintained and that deans and directors are informed of the status of SACSCOC approvals. Will Chair the SACSCOC Steering Committee and will direct the review of all documents prepared for notification and change applications.

SACSCOC Liaison

Responsible for providing support for department deans, directors and the Executive Vice President. The Liaison is responsible for corresponding with the assigned SACSCOC representative and for maintaining copies of all SACSCOC correspondence. The Liaison will co-chair the SACSCOC Steering Committee and will communicate feedback from the Review Team to the SACSCOC Steering Committee.

Information Analyst

Responsible for data collection and analysis needed for program planning, delivery method tracking and assessment. Coordinate software training for specialized software packages used to track assessment data and reporting.

SACSCOC Review Committee Coordinator

Chairs the SACSCOC Review Committee and provides feedback to the SACSCOC Steering Committee.

SACSCOC Review Committee

Serves as the internal review committee for all compliance reports and documentation. The committee is chaired by the SACSCOC Liaison and consists of members who volunteer their time on a yearly basis.

Curriculum Committee

The functions of the Curriculum Committee are: (1) review properly submitted requests for new curriculum program approval, and for additions, deletions, and changes to existing curricula; (2) verify that proposals do not have a negative impact on or interfere with other programs offered at the College; (3) ensure that all programs are in compliance with state established curriculum standards, articulation agreements, combined course library, the Course Delivery Approval Policy, and the SACSCOC Criteria; (4) submit recommendations of the Committee to the Executive Vice President and to the President for further action; and (5) disseminate information regarding curriculum business.

Membership includes:

- Registrar
- Director of Financial Aid
- Director of Library Services or designee
- Distance Learning Coordination
- One faculty member appointed by the respective Dean/Director of each instructional area:
 - # Applied Sciences and Technology
 - # Arts and Sciences
 - # Business Sciences
 - # One faculty member appointed by the Dean of Academic Development
 - # Representative from Financial Aid department

Membership is based on these positions and is permanent.

PLANNING AND APPROVAL PROCEDURES FOR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE

Procedures for internal planning and approval for substantive change are organized according to the type of substantive change involved. Four categories of substantive change procedures are outlined in this document. Roles and responsibilities for maintaining compliance in regard to substantive changes are outlined.

1. New programs, degrees, certificates or significant changes to the length of a program or certificate.

Examples of changes include but may not be limited to: expanding or adding new programs at the current degree level, initiating joint degrees with other institutions, initiating certificate programs for workforce development, expanding programs at previously approved off-campus sites, initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium, changing from clock hours to credit hours, or initiating degree completion programs. <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

Substantive changes are initiated through the assessment and planning process both at the department level and at the institution level. When new programs, degrees, certificates or changes to program or certificate length are under consideration the planning process will be initiated by the department dean or director working in collaboration with the Executive Vice President.

Substantive Change Planning and Approval Phase

Step 1: At the time that a change is being considered, the department dean or director must inform the Executive Vice President.

Step 2: The Executive Vice President will notify all pertinent offices of the initial receipt of the planned change and outline the approval process specific to the substantive change plan.

Step 3: The Director of Financial Aid will assess proposed substantive changes that may require Department of Education (DOE) approval, submit proposed changes to DOE for approval, keep SACSCOC Liaison and Dean of Students updated regarding approval processes, and provide related documentation to be used in appropriate compliance reports and documentation.

Step 4: The dean or director should first seek approval to offer the new programs, degrees, certificates or significant changes to the length of a program or certificate through the NCCCS office. The letter of approval from the system office should be kept on file with all planning documents.

Step 5: The department dean or director in coordination with the Executive Vice President and the SACSCOC liaison will prepare the **Substantive Change Notification Letter or Change Prospectus**.

Step 6: The SACSCOC Liaison and the SACSCOC Review Committee will review the document and will recommend changes, if needed, to the Executive Vice President.

Step 7: The Executive Vice President will notify the President that the substantive change proposal is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President or his/her designee will prepare the cover letter and send the package to SACSCOC via certified mail. The final package will consist of the following documentation: (1) original President's Cover Letter; (2) Substantive Change Prospectus; and (3) any other documentation as required. A copy of the Substantive Change Package will be kept on file in the office of Institutional Assessment.

Step 8: The dean or director should submit a curriculum change request to the Curriculum Committee. Letters of approval from the North Carolina Community College System and the SACSCOC response to the Substantive Change notification or prospectus must accompany the request. The distribution of the Curriculum Committee's decision includes:

- The dean submitting the request
- Chair of the Curriculum Committee
- Dean of Students
- Registrar
- SACSCOC Liaison
- VP of ASSIA

Step 9: Upon approval by the Curriculum Committee the dean/director may begin scheduling and marketing new programs, degrees or certificates.

2. New facilities or instructional sites

Consistent with SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy, Isothermal Community College must ensure that the name and address of every instructional site at which it offers class credit is reported to SACSCOC.

Examples include but may not be limited to: initiating a branch campus, initiating off-campus sites, relocating a main or branch campus, relocating an off-campus site.

Step 1: The President or his/her designee secures all external approvals of new facilities or instructional sites and maintains appropriate records. When a new facility or instructional site is approved, the Executive Vice President notifies the college deans and directors and the college SACSCOC Liaison who must initiate the coordination of a substantive change request. Further actions will be dependent on the percentage of credits toward the program that a student may earn in the new facility/instructional site as follows:

- 25% - 49%: The President will notify SACSCOC at least 6 months prior to implementation
- 50% or more: A Substantive Change Prospectus will be submitted and implementation will be initiated following SACSCOC approval

Step 2: The department dean or director in coordination with the Vice President and the SACSCOC Liaison will prepare the **Substantive Change Notification letter or Change Prospectus**. Templates are located on the Substantive Change webpage <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>.

Step 3: The Director of Financial Aid will assess proposed substantive changes that may require Department of Education (DOE) approval, submit proposed changes

to DOE for approval, keep the SACSCOC Liaison and Dean of Students updated regarding approval processes, and provide related documentation to be use in appropriate compliance reports and documentation.

Step 4: SACSCOC Liaison and the SACSCOC Review Committee will review the document and will recommend changes, if needed, to the Executive Vice President.

Step 5: The Executive Vice President will notify the President that the substantive change proposal is ready for submission to SACSCOC. The President or his/her designee will prepare the cover letter and send the package to SACSCOC via certified mail. The final package consist of the following documentation: (1) original President's Cover Letter; (2) Substantive Change Prospectus; and (3) any other documentation as required. A copy of the Substantive Change Package will be kept on file in the office of Institutional Assessment.

Step 6: Upon acknowledgement and/or approval from SACSCOC, the dean/director may begin scheduling and marketing new programs, degrees or certificates. If final approval requires a site visit, marketing should note that program offerings will continue pending SACSCOC approval.

Step 7: The Executive Vice President and the SACSCOC Liaison will coordinate preparation of documentation and plans for the site visit in collaboration with the appropriate Dean(s) and Lead Instructor(s).

3. Changes in Method of Instructional Delivery

New methods of instructional delivery involve significant departure from those assessed when the institution was most recently accredited. Examples of these delivery methods include distance learning and any other substantive deviation from traditional (face-to-face) instruction.

Step 1: Department deans and directors must first determine if a delivery method change will impact the percentage of a program offered in a method of instruction that substantively deviates from traditional (face-to-face) instruction. If changing the delivery method of an individual course will not impact the percentage of a program offered in a delivery method other than face-to-face, the Dean/Director may proceed to step 3. If the percentage of a program offered in a delivery method other than face-to-face will exceed 25% or 50% of the required credits for that program, the dean/director will proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: The department dean or director in coordination with the Executive Vice President and the SACSCOC Liaison will prepare the **Substantive Change Notification letter or Change Prospectus**. Templates are located on the Substantive Change webpage <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>.

Actions will be dependent on the percentage of credits toward the program that a student may earn as follows:

- 25% - 49%: The President will notify SACSCOC at least 6 months prior to implementation
- 50% or more: A Substantive Change Prospectus will be submitted and implementation will be initiated following SACSCOC approval

Step 3: The Director of Financial Aid will assess proposed substantive changes that may require Department of Education (DOE) approval, submit proposed changes to DOE for approval, keep the SACSCOC Liaison and Dean of Students updated regarding approval processes, and provide related documentation to be used in appropriate compliance reports and documentation.

Step 4: Prior to offering any program utilizing more than 25% of a delivery method other than traditional (face-to-face) instruction, an instructional delivery change request must be submitted and approved by the Curriculum Committee. SACSCOC approval, when required, must be obtained prior to offering more than 25% to 50% of a program utilizing new instructional delivery method. The following criteria will be considered when granting approval for program delivery through new instructional delivery methods.

- Instructor(s) delivering the course content has training and capacity to ensure course learning outcomes will be accomplished through the requested method.
- Evidence of sufficient student demand for the program for the program delivered via the requested delivery method.
- Sufficient financial resources to support the instructional and support needs of the students enrolled through the requested delivery method.
- SACSCOC has been notified of the changes and the College has received approval.

The same requirements also apply to alternative delivery methods other than hybrid and online.

Policy Number: 202-02-04BP

Adopted: February 22, 2011; September 30, 2014

[Download a PDF of this policy](#)