



30.040: University Policy on Substantive Changes

Responsible Executive: Vice President for Academic Affairs
Responsible Office: Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
Related Policy: 30.039 (University Policy on Curriculum Review and Approval)
SACS Substantive Change Policy
SCHEV policies related to program and organizational changes
Approved-On Date: March 17, 2008
Effective Date: March 17, 2008
Revision Date:

Policy Statement

Norfolk State University is committed to adhering to the policies and requirements of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). In accordance with SACS and SCHEV policies, Norfolk State University will notify SACS and SCHEV of substantive changes prior to initiation and will seek approval of changes. Norfolk State University also is committed to establishing procedures to ensure compliance with SACS and SCHEV policies and providing information to faculty and staff regarding curricular and organizational changes requiring notification and approval. This substantive change policy applies to Vice Presidents, Deans, Department Chairs, Program and Department Directors, Undergraduate and Graduate Program Coordinators, school and departmental Curriculum Committees, and faculty and staff wishing to make a curricular or organizational change.

Purpose

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredits an entire institution and not individual programs or individual institutional substantive changes. Its relationship is to the institution and not individuals or individual programs. It is responsible for reviewing all major institutional changes which occur between scheduled evaluation periods, determining whether or not the substantive change has affected or threatens the quality of the programs and services offered by the institution, determining whether the institution remains in compliance with SACS policies, and deciding whether or not to continue the institution's membership (i.e., accreditation). Therefore, prior to the implementation of a substantive change, it is the responsibility of an institution to follow the Substantive Change Procedures of SACS and inform SACS of such change in accord with those procedures. SACS is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. In order to maintain its recognition with the Department of Education, SACS is required to adhere to all federal laws and regulations associated with its status and must include in its policies provisions requiring prior approval of branch campuses and similar off-campus programs and distance learning activities before extending or continuing an institution's accreditation.

In addition, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is charged by the Code of Virginia, Section 23-9:6:1 with various responsibilities, authorities, and duties related to review, approval, and disapproval of academic program proposals and changes. SCHEV has established policies and procedures related to academic programs at public institutions as part of its obligation "to promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the State of Virginia" (Code of Virginia, Section 23-9.3[a]).

Norfolk State University is committed to adhering to the policies, procedures, and requirements of SACS and SCHEV.

Procedures

In accordance with SACS and SCHEV policies, Norfolk State University will notify SACS and SCHEV of substantive changes prior to initiation and will seek approval of changes. Substantive changes include but are not limited to:

- off-campus course and program offerings
- distance education course and program offerings
- online course and program offerings
- transmission of courses or programs through electronic means including teleconferencing
- courses and programs offered in conjunction with another institution through consortial or dual degree agreements
- adding a significantly different program
- offering courses or programs at a more advanced or lower level
- significantly altering the length of a program
- initiating degree completion programs
- renaming or establishing new academic organizational units (e.g., departments or schools)
- establishing a branch campus or off-campus instructional site
- establishing a merger or consolidation
- discontinuing a program or instructional site
- changes in governance

Norfolk State University is required to notify SACS and SCHEV of substantive changes and seek approval in accordance with SACS and SCHEV policies. For example, SACS requires notification prior to implementation when offering 25-49% of the coursework required for program completion online, off-campus, or through distance education. SACS requires notification at least six months in advance and prior approval when offering 50% or more of the coursework required for program completion online, off-campus, or through distance education. Also, SACS requires notification, including submission of a prospectus, and approval six to 12 months before certain changes are initiated such as new degree programs that are a significant departure from current degree program offerings (e.g., Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering which is significantly different from existing doctoral program offerings in clinical psychology and social work).

SCHEV requires prior approval for all new degree and spin-off programs before the programs are initiated. SCHEV asks for new degree program proposals nine months before initiation. Spin-off program proposals require approximately three months for review and action. SCHEV also requires notification and approval for program discontinuation, program mergers, and

other program changes such as degree designation, title, and CIP Code. Also, SCHEV notification and approval is required for organizational changes at or above the departmental level.

When preparing and reviewing course and program proposals that may involve a substantive change, proposal sponsors (i.e., faculty) and curriculum committees must follow and document adherence to curriculum review and approval policies and processes described in the Curriculum Manual¹. In addition, academic units proposing a new program or requesting approval for changes falling under the SACS or SCHEV definitions for substantive or organizational changes must prepare a prospectus in accordance with the requirements outlined in the SACS Substantive Change Policy² and SCHEV policies related to program approvals and changes³. The SACS prospectus and SCHEV proposal must accompany the Curriculum Change Request and must be reviewed and acted upon by the University Curriculum Committee at the time of the request for curriculum change in accordance with NSU policies and procedures for curriculum review and approval.

The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (curriculum management) is responsible for conducting an ongoing review of curricular revisions to identify changes that may be substantive in nature and may require reporting or prior approval by SACS. The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (curriculum management) will make the final determination of changes that are substantive in nature, will initiate appropriate reporting and approval processes in compliance with SACS, SCHEV, and NSU policies and procedures, and will refer the requests to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the SACS Liaison for action in accordance with SACS and SCHEV policies and procedures.

Additional information about the SACS Substantive Change Policy is available at:
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>.

Additional information about SCHEV policies and procedures regarding program level approvals is available at:
<http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/2002PoliciesProcedures4ApprovalsChanges.pdf>.

Additional information about SCHEV policies and procedures regarding organizational changes is available at:
<http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/PoliciesProceduresPublicInstitutionsInternalOff-CampusOrgChanges.pdf>.

¹ http://www.nsu.edu/iea/image/curriculum_manual.pdf

² <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20change%20policy.pdf>

³ <http://www.schev.edu/AdminFaculty/2002PoliciesProcedures4ApprovalsChanges.pdf>