

OFFICIAL POLICY

Subject/Title: Substantive Change and Accrediting Agency and Compliance

Policy Number: FPU-1.0127P

New Revised Technical Revision Only Emergency Policy

Date First Adopted: June 15, 2015

Date Revised: August 25, 2021

Responsible Division or Department: Academic Affairs

Initiating Authority: Terry Parker, Provost and Executive VP of Academic Affairs

A. APPLICABILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY:

This policy applies to all individuals involved in developing or overseeing programming offered for academic credit at any current or future campus location or in any modality, where the university conducts its business. It also applies to individuals with authority to initiate or implement institutional mergers, consolidations, or acquisitions, as well as changes to institutional mission, means of control, ownership, legal or operational status, governance structure, or footprint.

B. DEFINITION

Substantive Change. A significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Substantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services, as defined by federal regulations and SACSCOC policy.

C. BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Florida Polytechnic University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees. This accreditation provides public documentation of institutional quality and enables the University to seek eligibility to participate in federal programs.

In addition to five and ten-year reviews by the Commission, Florida Poly is required to follow substantive change procedures established by SACSCOC that entail notification and, where necessary, approval by the commission prior to implementing a qualifying change. Substantive change reporting requirements can be triggered by activities defined in the SACSCOC policy and procedures document that encompass certain institutional and program level changes as well as changes impacting the University's footprint by adding, closing, or modifying instruction at a location apart from Florida Poly's main campus.

Failure to comply with the Commission's substantive change procedures can result in serious consequences that include suspending the activity until required SACSCOC notification and approval is received, requiring the University to pay back financial aid dispersed to students, placing the University on sanction, or removing the University's accreditation entirely.

Certain substantive changes require only prior notification. Other changes require prior approval, which typically involves submission of a substantive change prospectus six to twelve months prior to the planned implementation of a substantive change.

SACSCOC assesses an administrative fee for many substantive changes. Some changes involve onsite review involving additional costs. Onsite reviews require the institution to update its compliance status with the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*, and provide in-depth information on core requirements, comprehensive standards, and federal requirements prior to committee review.

D. POLICY STATEMENT

Florida Polytechnic University maintains compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* through appropriate and timely reporting of qualifying changes. The Vice Provost of Academic Affairs serves as the University's accreditation liaison and is responsible for educating the campus community about substantive change reporting requirements and leading efforts to monitor high risk activities to proactively detect potential substantive changes.

The Provost's Office maintains records of all institution and program level actions that the Commission considers meeting the definition of substantive change. All questions about whether a change is substantive should be directed to the Provost's Office, SACSCOC liaison, or designee. It is expected that all substantive changes, including those requiring notification and/or approval prior to implementation, will also secure any other required approvals as necessitated by Florida Poly, its Board of Trustees, the Florida Board of Governors, or other regulatory body policy, regulation, or law.

In accordance with SACSCOC expectations, all official institutional correspondence with SACSCOC, including reporting of substantive changes, will be submitted only by the University President or the designated University SACSCOC liaison. Given the significance to the University's continued accreditation status, all substantive change requests requiring SACSCOC approval will be reported to the Florida Poly Board of Trustees' Board Chair or the full Board.

E. PROCEDURES:

At the earliest stage of consideration, any proposed change that could be deemed substantive according to the current, active SACSCOC policy must be communicated to the University's SACSCOC Liaison. Typically, this communication should occur 9 to 12 months in advance of implementation. The Liaison or designee will work with the unit proposing the change to determine whether the change constitutes a substantive one and what documentation must be prepared in advance to maintain compliance with University and Commission policy. The Accreditation Liaison is responsible for determining appropriate deadlines for submission to ensure all agencies (e.g. SACSCOC, BOG) are informed and any requisite approvals obtained prior to implementation of the change.

F. RELATED INFORMATION

[SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#)

Notifications should be communicated in writing to the University’s Accreditation Liaison, either directly or via assessment@floridapoly.edu.

Other Pertinent SACSCOC Policies

- [Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards](#)
- [Credit Hours](#)
- [Direct Assessment Competency-based Educational Programs](#)
- [Distance and Correspondence Education](#)
- [Dual Enrollment](#)
- [Merger/Consolidation, Acquisition, Change of Ownership, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status.](#)

Policy No.: <u>FPU-1.0127P</u>		POLICY APPROVAL	
_____	Initiating Authority	Date _____	
_____	Policies Committee Chair	Date _____	
_____	President	Date _____	
Approved by Florida Polytechnic University BOT, if required		Date _____	
EXECUTED SIGNATURE PAGES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL			

Form: Academic Policy Template 2021.05.03