

The University of Texas at El Paso  
Office of the Provost

Policy and Procedures for Reporting Substantive Change to SACSCOC

Revised DATE: March 28, 2017

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**Substantive Change Policy**

The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison is responsible for ensuring the timely reporting of substantive changes to SACSCOC. The general process\* for reporting substantive changes in accordance with institutional and SACSCOC policies is as follows:

1. Department chairpersons, program directors, and faculty members apprise their Deans of proposals for substantive changes within their programs. For a complete listing of the various kinds of substantive changes as defined by SACSCOC in the Policy Document concerning Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions<sup>1</sup>, see Appendix A of this document.
2. The Dean notifies the Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum) of the proposed change by way of a formal memorandum of request.
3. The Accreditation Liaison assesses the change and recommends whether the change requires SACSCOC notification or rises to the level of requiring a SACSCOC prospectus and/or approval.
4. The Accreditation Liaison communicates to the Deans the requirements for notification to SACSCOC and/or application for SACSCOC approval through a formal prospectus submission. The Accreditation Liaison also establishes the timeline required to meet the review requirements on campus and to SACSCOC. The Accreditation Liaison provides support to Deans and programs in the drafting of appropriate SACSCOC correspondence.
5. While colleges work with the Accreditation Liaison in the preparation of SACSCOC materials, the Provost's Office Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum concurrently submits curriculum requests to the university's Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UGCC) and Faculty Senate or Graduate Council when the request makes modifications to established curricula and/or proposes new programs. If the substantive change issue involves an academic agreement or memorandum of understanding with another institution or with an off-campus site, the Catalog and Academic Agreements Coordinator facilitates the process.
6. Following internal review of the request, the Accreditation Liaison submits a letter of notification and/or a prospectus to SACSCOC in accordance with timelines established by

SACSCOC in the Policy Document “[Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions](#)”<sup>2</sup> (see Appendix B of this document).

7. Programs may not implement changes until the Accreditation Liaison notifies SACSCOC of the proposed change and, where applicable, secures SACSCOC approval or acknowledgement of notification.
8. Communication with the campus community about the current standing of any request for approval by SACSCOC of any substantive change is the responsibility of the Accreditation Liaison.
9. All mergers, consolidations, changes in governance, or significant changes to the University Mission will originate with the President’s Cabinet. The President and/or the Vice President proposing the change will consult with both Legal Affairs and the Accreditation Liaison, to assure compliance with University System, State law, Federal Law, and Regional Accreditation procedures.

### **Safeguards**

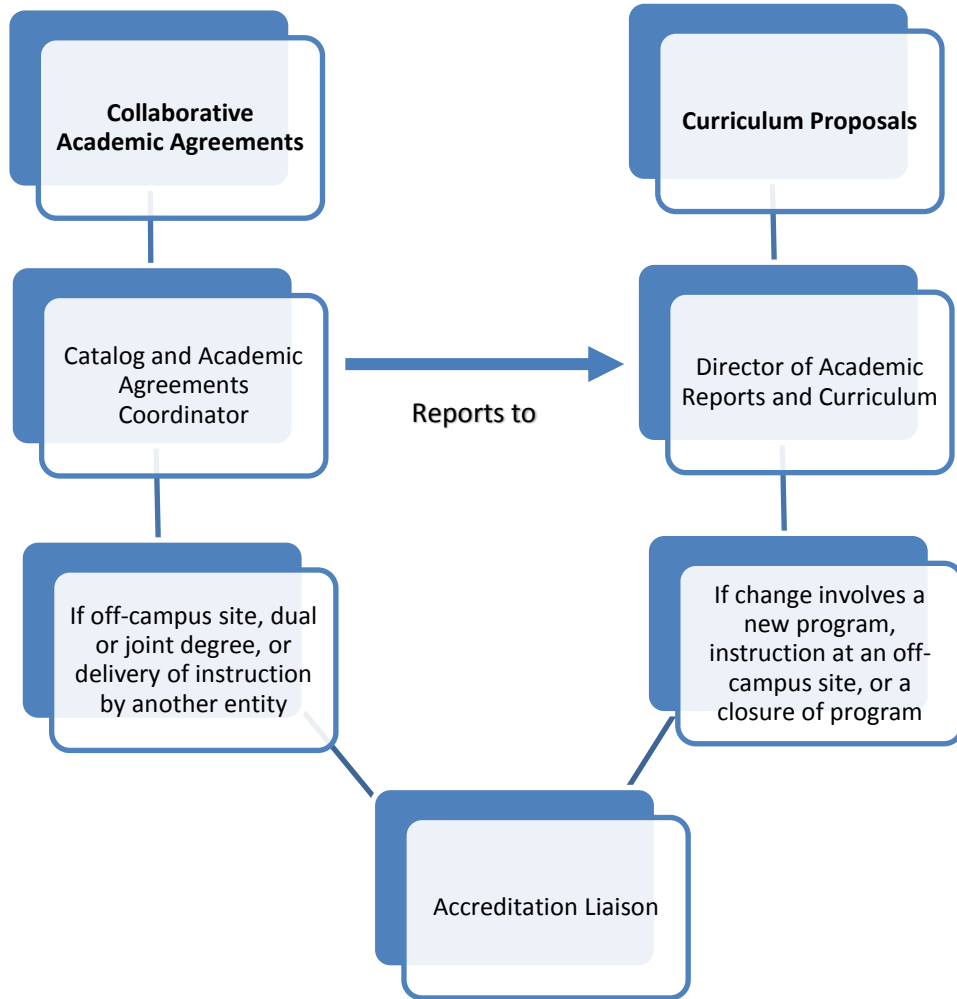
The vast majority of potential substantive changes involve the initiation or closing of degree programs, the development of collaborative academic agreements, and/or the implementation of degree programs at off-campus sites. Thus, those who are in charge of implementing these processes are part of the same team in Academic Affairs: the Curriculum Office. The Curriculum Office, in turn, reports to the Institutional Accreditation Liaison Officer (IALO). This reporting structure assures that

1. The IALO is informed of all such plans, far in advance of implementation.
2. The IALO will subsequently work with the relevant parties to create a prospectus, write letters of notification, and/or secure other documentation.
3. The IALO will send appropriate documentation and notification to SACSCOC.
4. Once the IALO receives the necessary acknowledgment letters, approvals, or other correspondence is received from SACSCOC, the IALO will notify relevant parties (Deans, Chairs, Directors) of approvals and other correspondence.
5. The IALO will authorize the Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum and/or the Catalog and Academic Agreements Coordinator to implement the new programs, program closures, collaborative agreements, or off-campus sites.

In addition, substantive changes involving broader institutional change, such as mergers, consolidations, changes in governance, or changes in mission will emerge from the President’s cabinet and be vetted by both Legal Affairs and the IALO.

\*More detailed procedures for specific substantive changes are provided in the Procedures section of this document.

Figure 1. Flowchart Academic Agreements and Curriculum Processes



## Specific Procedures for Types of Substantive Change

1. It is assumed that all additions or changes to curriculum must also follow the regular internal curriculum review process.
2. It is assumed that all academic agreements must also follow the regular review and vetting process prior to being fully executed.

## Expanding at Current Degree Level (Significant Departure from Current Programs)

SACSCOC provides the following guidelines for identifying programs that are significant departures from the institution's existing offerings:

*Significant departure- a program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the mode of delivery in question. To determine whether a new program is a "significant departure," it is helpful to consider the following questions:*

- *What previously approved programs does the institution offer that are closely related to the new program and how are they related?*
- *Will significant additional equipment or facilities be needed?*
- *Will significant additional financial resources be needed?*
- *Will a significant number of new courses be required?*
- *Will a significant number of new faculty members be required?*
- *Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?*

### Process

- During the design and review phases of a new academic program, the Provost's Office (Provost and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum) reviews the program proposal.
- If a new program is being proposed, the Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum forwards the proposal to the Accreditation Liaison to determine whether it constitutes a significant departure from existing programs as defined in the SACSCOC Substantive Change policy. The Accreditation Liaison immediately poses any questions regarding potential Substantive Changes to the SACSCOC VP or SACSCOC Director of Substantive Change.
- If the Accreditation Liaison determines that the proposed program serves as a significant departure from existing programs, the proposing department and college work with the Accreditation Liaison to draft a SACSCOC prospectus (Appendix B).
- After receiving approval from the UT System to offer the new program, the Accreditation Liaison reviews and edits the draft SACSCOC prospectus and submits the final version and [cover sheet](#) to SACSCOC. Submission of the Prospectus to SACSCOC is required on January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation or July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation. SACSCOC approval is required prior to implementation.
- If it is determined that a program is not a significant departure from existing programs, the Accreditation Liaison will enter a memo into the substantive change database, indicating the rationale for that decision.

## Significantly Altering the Length of a Program

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SACSCOC provides the following guideline regarding significant alternation of a program's length:

*Significant changes in program length are those with noticeable impact on the program's completion time (e.g., increasing a baccalaureate degree from 124 hours to 150 hours).*

### Process

- The department chairperson provides a proposal to the Dean following the traditional curriculum change process including:
  - Memorandum detailing rationale for the change
  - Changes to the existing degree plan
  - Revised catalog copy
  - Verification of approvals by the department faculty, college curriculum committee, and Dean
  - Any additional documentation supporting the proposal
- The Dean reviews, approves, and forwards the proposal to the Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum).
- During review by the Provost's Office, consideration is given to any change in the number of credit hours required. If a significant change is identified, the department and college are asked to prepare a modified prospectus for submission to SACSCOC. The Accreditation Liaison provides support to Deans and programs in the drafting of appropriate SACSCOC correspondence.
- The Provost's Office Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum concurrently submits the proposal to the university's Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UGCC) and Faculty Senate or Graduate Council.
- Upon internal approval, changes to existing degree programs are submitted for review by the UT System and/or THECB.
- The Accreditation Liaison contacts the Commission Staff regarding the required elements of the modified prospectus and deadlines.
- After UT System and/or THECB approval and prior to implementation, the Accreditation Liaison submits a [cover sheet](#) and modified prospectus to SACSCOC detailing the change in credit hours and any other materials requested by the Commission Staff.
- Implementation of new degree requirements will not be permitted until UT System, THECB, and SACSCOC approval is secured.

## Initiating Degree Completion Programs

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### Process

- The department chairperson provides a proposal to the Dean with the following documentation to request any change to an existing program:
  - Program description
  - Evidence of market need
  - Evidence of student demand
  - Detailed list of degree requirements
  - List of faculty members
  - Information regarding resource needs

- Budget
- The Dean reviews, approves, and forwards the proposal to the Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum).
- The Provost's Office Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum concurrently submits the proposal to the university's UGCC and Faculty Senate or Graduate Council.
- Simultaneously, the department and college will draft a SACSCOC prospectus detailing much of the same information. The Accreditation Liaison provides support to Deans and programs in the drafting of appropriate SACSCOC correspondence. The Accreditation Liaison files the prospectus until UT System and THECB approval is secured.
- Following local approval, the Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum submits the request to the UT System and THECB for consideration.
- Following approval by the UT System and THECB, the Accreditation Liaison submits the [cover sheet](#) and prospectus to SACSCOC by January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation or July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation.
- The new degree will not be implemented until UT System, THECB, and SACSCOC approval is secured.

## **Distance Learning Programs and Course Offerings**

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### **Programs Offering Less Than 25% of Coursework Online**

#### Process

- Adding online courses requires consultation with appropriate personnel at the Extended University and follows the traditional curriculum approval process.
- No SACSCOC notification is necessary.

### **Programs Offering 25-49% of Coursework Online; or Programs Offering 50% or more of Coursework Online**

#### Process

- Consultation with the Dean of the Extended University should take place in the development of any substantial, new online course offerings.
- New coursework and programs follow the traditional curriculum approval process.
- Because UTEP has already been approved to offer distance-learning programs, no letter of notification is required unless the program is a significant departure from existing programs.

## **Initiating a Direct Assessment Competency-Based Program**

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SACSCOC provides the following definition of a direct assessment competency-based educational program:

*Direct assessment competency-based educational program- instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, uses direct assessment of student learning relying solely on the attainment of defined competencies, or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others. The assessment must be consistent with the accreditation of the institution or program using the results of the assessment.*

*The program must meet the following characteristics:*

- (1) *It does not subscribe to conventional notions of the clock hour, seat time, term length, or the credit hour; rather, it relies on the student's ability to demonstrate clearly defined and measurable competencies in a designated program.*
- (2) *It is designed and delivered within the framework of the program's defined knowledge, skills, and competencies as demonstrated by students, rather than in terms of prescribed courses.*
- (3) *A student may acquire the requisite competencies from multiple sources and at various times other than, or in addition to, the learning experiences provided by the institution. As such, the length of time it takes to demonstrate learning may be different for each student.*
- (4) *It often allows for alternative approaches to teaching and learning.*
- (5) *It may rely almost exclusively upon students using direct assessment testing models to demonstrate their mastery of program and degree content.*

### Process

- Follow standard University Curriculum Approval process for approving the program through either the Undergraduate or Graduate pathway.
- As approval is proceeding, Chair or Director will meet with Accreditation Liaison to review [SACSCOC policy](#) for Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs.
- Once internal approval is received, Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum will consult with Accreditation Liaison and Chair or Director.
- If at least 25% of credits will be offered in this manner, then Accreditation Liaison will work with program to submit a screening form with letter of notification to SACSCOC.
- If prospectus is required, submitted by March 15 (for June review) or September 1 (for December review) according to [SACSCOC policy](#).
- A site visit is required for all direct assessment competency-based programs.
- Program will not be implemented until approval is received from all relevant internal and external approvers, including SACSCOC.

## **Initiating Certificate Programs**

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### **Certificate Programs that Utilize Existing, Approved Courses**

Certificate programs that utilize existing approved courses, including programs at an employer's request and on short notice, do not require SACSCOC notification. However, departments refer to UTEP's Curriculum Change Procedures to ensure that proper actions are met for approval by the institution, UT System, and THECB.

### **Certificate Programs at a New Off-Campus Site**

Certificate programs that will be offered at an off-campus site require SACSCOC approval. Refer to the process for off-campus sites, above.

### **Certificate Programs that are Significant Departures from Existing Programs**

Certificate programs in new areas follow the process for departures from existing programs, detailed above. If the initiation of a certificate program is a significant departure from previously approved programs and is requested by an employer on short notice, see Short Notice Certificate Programs below.

## **Short Notice Certificate Programs or Military Contracted Sites**

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If initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site at an employer's request and on short notice (previously approved program), initiating a certificate program that is a significant departure from previously approved programs at an employer's request and on short notice, or adding a site under a U.S. military contract for a previously approved program...

#### Process

- Follow Procedure 1 guidelines
- The Accreditation Liaison contacts the Commission Staff regarding the required elements of the modified prospectus and deadlines.
- Submit a [cover sheet](#) and modified prospectus to SACSCOC including any other requested materials by the Commission Staff.
- Programs will not be implemented until SACSCOC approval has been obtained.

### **Off-Campus Sites**

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#### **Programs Offering Less Than 25% of Coursework Off-Campus**

##### Process

- The department chairperson prepares a memorandum to the Dean, indicating the percentage and listing of coursework that will be offered off-campus.
- The Dean reviews and approves the offerings and forwards a request and copy of the original memorandum to the Provost's Office (Provost and Accreditation Liaison) prior to the scheduling of any off-campus courses.
- No SACSCOC notification is necessary.

#### **Programs Offering 25-49% of Coursework Off-Campus**

##### Process

- The proposed agreement is sent to the Catalog and Academic Agreements Coordinator who will consult with the Accreditation Liaison on the proposed agreement.
- The Accreditation Liaison consults with the Department Chairperson, who will prepare a memorandum to the Dean. The memorandum contains the following information:
  - Percentage of the program to be offered off-campus
  - Listing of the courses that will be offered
  - Location of the off-campus offerings
  - Targeted student population
  - Description of any faculty implications
  - Description of any funding implications
  - Description of any resource implications
- The Dean reviews and approves the offerings and forwards a request and copy of the original memorandum to the Provost's Office (Provost and Accreditation Liaison) at least two months prior to offering off-campus coursework.
- The Accreditation Liaison provides written notification of the offerings including the street address and implementation date to SACSCOC prior to implementation.



## Programs Offering 50% or More of Their Coursework Off-Campus

### Process

- The proposed agreement is sent to the Catalog and Academic Agreements Coordinator who will consult with the Accreditation Liaison on the proposed prospectus.
- The Accreditation Liaison works with the department chairperson to prepare a SACSCOC prospectus (Appendix B). The prospectus includes:
  - Abstract
  - Background Information
  - Assessment of Need
  - Description of the Change, including courses offered and syllabi for all courses
  - Faculty, including CV information
  - Resources
  - Financial Support and Implications
  - Evaluation and Assessment
- The Dean reviews and approves the offerings and forwards a request and the prospectus to the Provost's Office (Provost and Accreditation Liaison).
- The Accreditation Liaison provides written notification, including a copy of the prospectus and [cover sheet](#), to SACSCOC by January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation or July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation.
- The program may not be implemented until SACSCOC has approved the offerings. The Accreditation Liaison will notify the Dean and department chairperson when approval has been received.
- SACSCOC can determine a site visit is necessary at any time ([see policy](#)).

### Expanding Program Offerings at Previously-Approved Off-Campus Sites

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SACSCOC approval or notification is not required prior to expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites except when the following occurs in the process:

- Altering significantly the length of a program- follow the process for Significantly Altering the Length of a Program, detailed above.
- When the program is significantly different from current programs at the site AND at the institution, the procedure for expanding at the current level, significant departure, must be used.

NOTE: If expanding program offerings at a previously approved off-campus site by adding approved programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site but NOT at the institution, no SACSCOC notification is necessary.

### Moving an Off-Campus Instructional Site (Serving the Same Geographical Area)

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#### Process

- The department chairperson prepares a memorandum to the Dean. The memorandum should contain the following information:
  - Location of the new off-campus site
  - Percentage of the program to be offered at the new off-campus site
  - Brief explanation of the reason for the move

- The Dean reviews and approves the change and forwards a request and copy of the original memorandum to the Provost and the Accreditation Liaison.
- The Accreditation Liaison works with the Dean and department chairperson to prepare a letter of notification.
- Prior to implementation, the Accreditation Liaison provides written notification of the move including the old address, new address, and implementation date to SACSCOC.

## **Initiating a Branch Campus**

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SACSCOC provides the following definition of a branch campus:

*Branch campus- a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is:*

- (1) permanent in nature;*
- (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential;*
- (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and*
- (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.*

### Process

- Decisions to request authority to establish branch campuses are left to the President, Provost, and Vice President of Business Affairs of the institution. Any desire to establish a branch campus is discussed with the UT System and THECB from the outset.
- The Provost, President, and Vice President of Business Affairs prepare the appropriate documentation and the Provost's Office Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum submits it to the UT System and THECB.
- Immediately following submission of documentation to the UT System and THECB, the Accreditation Liaison drafts a SACSCOC prospectus (Appendix B) requesting authority to establish the branch campus.
- Once UT System and THECB approval is secured, the Accreditation Liaison submits the [cover sheet](#) and prospectus to SACSCOC. Approval by SACSCOC is required on January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation or July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation.
- No off-campus offerings will be provided at the new branch campus location until UT System, THECB, and SACSCOC approval is secured.
- A site visit will be required for all new branch campus locations.

## **Offering Courses or Programs through a Contractual Agreement or Consortium**

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### Process

- Any desire to develop ventures delivered through contractual agreement or consortium will be discussed at the outset of the design stage with the President, Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum, and Coordinator of Catalog and Academic Agreements), Office of Legal Affairs, and the Vice President for Business Affairs.
- The department or college initiating the project drafts a memorandum to the Dean. The memorandum will include the following information:
  - Abstract of the venture including the accreditation status of the partner institution

- Detailed description of the academic program including a list of degree requirements, where and how students will complete each requirement, etc.
- Detailed description of student services that will be provided
- Detailed budget plan that includes all income and expenditures by the institution
- Additional agreements as they pertain to program accreditation
- Pertinent travel details if applicable
- Faculty qualifications implications
- Date of implementation and duration of the program
- The Dean of the college initiating the venture consults with the Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum, and the Coordinator of Catalog and Academic Agreements), President, Office of Legal Affairs, and Vice President for Business Affairs and secures their approvals. In some cases, particularly those involving modifications to curricula, Graduate Council or Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UGCC) and Faculty Senate approval may be required.
- Following local approval, the Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum submits the appropriate paperwork to the UT System and THECB, including a copy of the signed, fully executed contractual agreement.
- Immediately following approval by the UT System and acknowledgment by the THECB, the Accreditation Liaison submits a letter of notification and a copy of the signed, fully executed contractual agreement to SACSCOC prior to implementation of the program.
- No students may begin pursuing the degree program until UT System approval is secured and THECB and SACSCOC notifications are submitted.
- If entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs and if the entity provides 25% or more of the educational program, then Procedure 1 guidelines must be followed by submitting a [cover sheet](#) and prospectus by January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation or July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation.

NOTE: If the courses or programs are being offered as part of a military contract or as a part of a certificate program requested by an employer on short notice, please see [the policy](#) on Short Notice Certificate Programs or Military Contracted sites.

## Initiating Joint or Dual Degrees

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SACSCOC provides the following [guidelines](#) for joint degrees/collaborative academic ventures:

*Collaborative academic arrangements are agreements between institutions accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and accredited or non-accredited degree-granting institutions of higher education throughout the world for purposes of awarding academic credits and/or educational program completion credentials, e.g., certificates, diplomas, degrees or transcripts.*

SACSCOC also provides the following definitions:

- *A dual educational program is one whereby students study at two or more institutions, and each institution awards a separate program completion credential bearing only its own name, seal and signature.*
- *A joint educational program is one whereby students study at two or more institutions and are awarded a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals and signatures of each of the participating institutions.*

## Process

- Any desire to develop collaborative curriculum ventures is discussed at the outset of the design stage with the President, Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, Catalog and Academic Agreements Coordinator, and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum), the Office of Legal Affairs, and the Vice President for Business Affairs.
- The department or college initiating the venture consults with the Catalog and Academic Agreements Coordinator to complete the appropriate paperwork for the UT System and THECB pertaining to joint and collaborative degree programs.
- Simultaneously, the department or college initiating the project drafts a memorandum that includes the following:
  - Abstract of the venture including the accreditation status of the partner institution
  - Detailed description of the dual degree or joint degree program including a list of degree requirements, where students will complete each requirement, etc.
  - Detailed description of the distribution of student services that will be provided by each institution
  - Detailed budget plan that includes all income and expenditures by the institution
  - Additional agreements as they pertain to program accreditation
  - Pertinent travel details
  - Faculty qualifications implications
  - Date of implementation and duration of the program
- The Dean of the college initiating the venture consults with the Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, Catalog and Academic Agreements Coordinator, and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum), President, Office of Legal Affairs, and Vice President for Business Affairs and secures approval from each.
- The Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum submits the approved agreement to the Graduate Council or Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UGCC) and Faculty Senate for review and approval.
- Following local approval, the Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum submits the appropriate paperwork to the UT System and THECB.
- If the joint or dual program is with an institution that is accredited by SACSCOC, following approval by the UT System and THECB, the partner institutions and UTEP sign the approved agreement and the Accreditation Liaison submits a letter of notification that includes a copy of the signed, fully executed agreement and contact information for each institution to SACSCOC at least six months prior to implementation.
- If the joint or dual program is with an institution that is not accredited by SACSCOC, while the agreement is up for UT System and THECB review, the department or college initiating a joint or dual degree program works with the Accreditation Liaison to provide appropriate information for a letter of notification and other documentation, as needed, including:
  - A notification letter that includes a statement of intent, the anticipated beginning date for the agreement, a description of the proposed agreement, the address/location of each institution involved in the agreement, and information for the contact person(s) at each participating institution
  - A copy of the final signed, fully executed agreement
  - A description of (1) any external governmental or accrediting agency approval for the institution(s) or program(s) involved in the agreement, excluding the

SACSCOC institution(s), (2) the process of quality assurance used by the agency granting this approval, and (3) any required legal or licensing approvals

- Documentation that the courses or programs of the non-SACSCOC Partner institution(s) are consistent with the educational purpose and goals of the SACSCOC-accredited institution(s)
- Documentation that the institution meets the provisions of Comprehensive Standard 3.4.7 (Consortial relationships/contractual agreements), including the analysis of credits accepted in transfer
- Documentation that faculty involved in the collaboration are qualified to teach assigned components or courses and a description of the means by which the SACSCOC-accredited institution(s) will monitor these qualifications (Submit a completed SACSCOC Faculty Roster Form.)
- Documentation describing the physical and learning resources that will support the collaboration
- A plan and process to monitor and ensure that the quality of contributions made by the partner institution(s) meets applicable SACSCOC requirements: A plan and process produced by the SACSCOC-accredited institution(s) ensuring that the agreement does not result in the appearance of extending SACSCOC accreditation to partner institutions through promotional materials, academic publications, student transcripts, credentials verifying program completion, and releases to the news media. (See the disclaimer statement above).
- Prototypes of official academic documents (e.g. student transcript, degree, diploma, certificate) involved in the agreement
- The Accreditation Liaison sends notification of the dual- or joint-degree program to SACSCOC at least six months prior to implementation.
- No students may begin pursuing the dual- or joint-degree program until UT System, THECB, and SACSCOC approval is secured.
- If entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs and if the entity provides 25% or more of the educational program, then Procedure 1 guidelines must be followed by submitting a [cover sheet](#) and prospectus by January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation or July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation.

NOTE: If the dual- or joint-degree program involves a significant departure, please also see the guidelines [here](#). If the dual- or joint-degree program involves a new off-campus site offering 50% or more credits, please also see the guidelines [here](#).

## **Closing an Institution or Program**

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SACSCOC recommends the following teach-out options when closing a program:

1. *The institution teaches out currently enrolled students; no longer admits students to programs; and terminates the program, the operations of a branch campus, or the operations of an institution after students have graduated.*
2. *The institution enters into a contract for another institution or organization to teach out the educational programs or program. Such a teach-out agreement requires Commission approval.*

Based on the options above, the institution will follow one of the following procedures.

## Closing a Program (Internal Teach-Out Protocol)

### Process

- The department submits a memorandum to the college Dean detailing the following information:
  - Rationale for closing the program
  - Number of students remaining in the program
  - Teach-out plan for students remaining in the program
  - Timeline for completion
- The Dean reviews and approves the plan.
- The Dean submits the memorandum and endorsement to the Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, Coordinator of Catalog and Academic Agreements, and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum).
- The Accreditation Liaison submits notification to SACSCOC, which includes a teach-out plan according to SACSCOC [policy](#).
- Following SACSCOC approval, the Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum provides the appropriate documents the UT System and THECB requesting to close the program.

## Closing a Program with Teach-Out Agreement with Another Institution

### Process

- The department submits a memorandum to the college Dean detailing the following information:
  - Rationale for closing the program
  - Number of students remaining in the program
  - Teach-out plan for students remaining in the program
  - Timeline for completion
- The Dean reviews and approves the plan.
- The Dean submits the memorandum and endorsement to the Provost's Office (Provost, Accreditation Liaison, Coordinator of Catalog and Academic Agreements, and Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum).
- The decision to seek a teach-out agreement with another institution will be discussed with the President, Provost, Dean, and Office of Legal Affairs.
- Copies of the signed, fully executed agreement will be reviewed and endorsed locally by the Dean, Office of Legal Affairs, Provost, and President.
- Following local approval, the Provost's Office Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum submits a copy of the agreement to the UT System and THECB.
- Following UT System and THECB approval, the Accreditation Liaison submits a description and a signed copy of the teach-out agreement to SACSCOC, along with a letter of notification regarding the closure according to SACSCOC [policy](#).
- Following SACSCOC approval, the Director of Academic Reports and Curriculum provides the appropriate documents to the UT System and THECB requesting to close the program.

## Closing an Institution

### Process

- A decision to close the institution is left to the President of the institution and the UT System. The President's Office manages the closure.
- The President's Office submits the appropriate documentation to the UT System and THECB.
- Immediately following submission of documentation to the UT System and THECB, the Accreditation Liaison drafts a letter of notification to accompany a copy of the institution's teach-out plan. The UT System and THECB consider changes in governance, ownership, control, or legal status at a quarterly meeting. The institution submits items to the UT System three months prior to a quarterly meeting. The UT System meetings are held in February, May, August, and November. The institution expects final State approvals following a THECB meeting in January, April, July, or October.
- Immediately following receipt of UT System and THECB approval, the Accreditation Liaison submits a letter of notification with the teach-out plan and signed teach-out agreement, if applicable, to SACSCOC according to their [policy](#).
- Closure will not take place until SACSCOC approval has been secured.
- If the closure of the institution involves changes in governance, ownership, control, or legal status, a letter of notification will also be sent by December 15 (for June review) or June 1 (for December review). A [cover sheet](#), institutional summary form, and prospectus will be submitted by March 15 (for June review) or September 1 (for December review) in accordance with [SACSCOC policy](#).

## Initiating Merger/Consolidation with Another Institution

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### Process

- Decisions concerning mergers and consolidations are left to the President of the institution and the UT System. The President's Office manages all mergers or consolidations.
- A letter of notification is prepared and submitted by the Accreditation Liaison to SACSCOC by December 15 (for June review) or June 1 (for December review).
- The President's Office submits the appropriate documentation to the UT System and THECB. The UT System and THECB consider a request to initiate a merger or consolidate with another institution at a quarterly meeting. The institution submits items to the UT System three months prior to a quarterly meeting. The UT System meetings are held in February, May, August, and November. The institution expects final State approvals following a THECB meeting in January, April, July, or October.
- Following submission of documentation to the UT System and THECB, the Accreditation Liaison drafts a SACSCOC prospectus (Appendix B).
- Immediately following receipt of UT System and THECB approvals, the Accreditation Liaison submits the SACSCOC [cover sheet](#), institutional summary form, and prospectus. SACSCOC prospectuses are due to SACSCOC by March 15 (for June review) or September 1 (for December review) according to [SACSCOC policy](#).
- A site visit will be required for all mergers and consolidations.

## Changing Governance, Ownership, Control, or Legal Status of the Institution

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### Process

- Decisions concerning changes in institutional governance, ownership, control, or legal status are left to the President of the institution and the UT System. The President's Office manages all modifications including, acquisition of any program or site from another institution and/or adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing.
- A letter of notification is prepared and submitted by the Accreditation Liaison to SACSCOC by December 15 (for June review) or June 1 (for December review).
- The President's Office submits the appropriate documentation to the UT System and THECB. The UT System and THECB consider changes in governance, ownership, control, or legal status at a quarterly meeting. The institution submits items to the UT System three months prior to a quarterly meeting. The UT System meetings are held in February, May, August, and November. The institution expects final State approvals following a THECB meeting in January, April, July, or October.
- Immediately following submission of documentation to the UT System and THECB, the Accreditation Liaison drafts a SACSCOC prospectus (Appendix B) requesting authority to make the requested change in governance, ownership, control, or legal status.
- Following receipt of UT System and THECB approval, the Accreditation Liaison submits the SACSCOC [cover sheet](#), institutional summary form, and prospectus to SACSCOC according to the [SACSCOC policy](#). The due dates for SACSCOC to consider changes in governance, ownership, control, or legal status are March 15 (for June review) or September 1 (for December review). The prospectus must be submitted at least six months prior to implementation of changes.
- A site visit will be required for all changes in ownership resulting in change of control or changes of governance, ownership, or legal status.

### **Relocating the Institutions Main Campus or Branch Campus**

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#### Process

- Decisions to request authority to relocate the main campus or branch campuses are left to the President, Provost, and Vice President of Business Affairs of the institution. Any desire to relocate the main campus or any branch campuses is discussed with the UT System and THECB from the outset.
- Two years prior to relocation, the Provost's Office submits the appropriate documentation to the UT System and THECB.
- Immediately following submission of documentation to the UT System and THECB, the Accreditation Liaison drafts a SACSCOC prospectus (Appendix B) requesting authority to relocate the main campus or branch campus.
- Following receipt of UT System and THECB approval, the Accreditation Liaison submits the SACSCOC prospectus and [cover sheet](#) by January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation or July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation.
- Implementation will not occur until UT System, THECB, and SACSCOC approval is secured.

### **Significantly Altering the Mission of the Institution**

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SACSCOC provides the following guidelines regarding a significant change in the institution's mission:



*Significant changes in mission are those that lead to a fundamental shift in the nature of the institution, such as an institution that had offered only professional programs deciding to add general education offerings, or a technical college transforming itself into a comprehensive community college.*

The institution is required to review its mission and submit any modifications to the UT System and THECB periodically. This process should be followed during years in which the institution reviews its mission and submits modifications to the UT System and THECB.

#### Process

- The President or President's cabinet initiates modifications to the institution's mission.
- During the drafting phase, the Accreditation Liaison reviews the changes to determine whether they constitute a significant change from the existing mission of the institution.
- If changes are significant, the Accreditation Liaison drafts a SACSCOC modified prospectus, which will be kept on file until local and State reviews are complete.
- Following local approval, including review by the Faculty Senate, the Provost's Office drafts and provides the appropriate documentation to the UT System and THECB. The UT System Board of Regents and THECB consider changes to institutional mission statements at a quarterly meeting. The institution submits items to the UT System three months prior to a quarterly meeting. The UT System meetings are held in February, May, August, and November. The institution expects final State approvals following a THECB meeting in January, April, July, or October.
- The Accreditation Liaison contacts the Commission Staff regarding the required elements of the modified prospectus and deadlines.
- Immediately following approval of the new mission by the UT System and THECB, the Accreditation Liaison reviews, edits, and submits the modified prospectus, [cover sheet](#), and any other materials requested by the Commission Staff.
- The new mission of the institution will not be published, nor will any steps be taken to modify the scope of the institution, until UT System, THECB, and SACSCOC approval is secured.

#### **Changing Clock Hours to Credit Hours**

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The University of Texas at El Paso already operates on a credit hour system. This type of change is not applicable to the institution.

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## SACSCOC Appendix B: The Substantive Change Prospectus

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Use this information to determine the content and process for submitting a prospectus for a “Procedure One” substantive change requiring approval prior to implementation.

The Prospectus must be accompanied with a completed [Cover Sheet](#).

### **Do not use this information for**

- mergers, consolidations, change of ownership, acquisitions, and change of governance, control, form, or legal status (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Mergers.pdf>),
  - direct assessment competency-based educational programs (<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/DirectAssessmentCompetencyBased.pdf>), or
  - level changes (<http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/ApplicationLevelChange.docx>).
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Before developing a prospectus, please review all of the information below concerning the content of the prospectus and how to submit the prospectus. When developing a prospectus, respond to all of the applicable requests for information.

**Please remember that the prospectus should address the specific substantive change for which you are requesting approval.** For example, if you are seeking approval for an off-campus site where adult, employed students will be enrolled in a graduate degree program, address specifically only the student support services that those students will need and describe how the support will be provided. Do not describe student support services that those students will not need such as athletic programs, dormitories, cafeterias, and other on-campus services that they cannot access.

## ***How to Submit the Prospectus***

### ▪ **Each submission must include the following in the order listed:**

1. Transmittal letter signed by an institutional representative which briefly explains the submission.
2. “[Cover Sheet for Submission of Substantive Changes Requiring Approval](#)” form (available on the Substantive Change webpage at [www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp](http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp)).
3. Name, telephone number, and email address of the person who may be contacted concerning questions about the prospectus.
4. A list of degrees and majors which the institution is authorized to grant (photocopy from the catalog is acceptable).

5. A list of existing **approved** off-campus sites and their addresses. **Note:** an approved site is one for which a prospectus has been submitted and which SACSCOC has approved to offer 50% or more of a program. A site where 25-49% of a program is offered is not considered to be an “approved” site; it is a site for which only notification has been accepted by SACSCOC.
  6. Prospectus (should be no longer than 25 pages plus appendices).
- **Submit only one** copy of the above materials to the President of SACSCOC at the address listed on the Cover Sheet.
  - Submit the **Transmittal Letter and Cover Sheet** in hard copy (paper).
  - Submit the body of the prospectus itself in hard copy (paper), flash drive, CD or DVD.

**Documents will not be accepted via e-mail.**

**Special Note:** SACSCOC will accept documentation submitted for approval to a system office or to a state coordinating or governing board, provided such documentation includes all the information required in a prospectus as listed below. **However**, the submission must include the completed [Cover Sheet](#) and Transmittal Letter and **must contain an index** correlating the documentation submitted to another entity with the corresponding information required in a prospectus.

**Submissions lacking a clear, easily used index will not be accepted and will be returned to the institution without review. Faculty qualifications must be documented using the [Faculty Roster Form](#), utilizing the [Faculty Roster instructions](#). Curriculum vitae submitted in lieu of a faculty roster will not be accepted and will result in the submission being returned to the institution without review.**

**Please note** that SACSCOC reserves the right to make amendments to the requirements outlined below for certain types of changes.

## ***Required Components of the Prospectus***

1. **ABSTRACT** (limit to one page or less)
  - Describe the proposed change with its date of implementation.
  - If a new program, identify where it will be offered.
  - If a new off-campus site or branch, list its complete physical address.
  - Provide projected number of students, if applicable.
  - Indicate the projected life of the program or site, if applicable (single cohort or ongoing).
  - Describe the primary target audience.
  - Describe the instructional delivery methods to be used.
  - Describe strengths of the institution to undertake this change.

2. **DETERMINATION OF NEED FOR THE CHANGE/RELATIONSHIP TO MISSION/PLANNING AND APPROVALS FOR THE CHANGE**

- Describe how the change is consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.
- Describe the rationale and need for the program to include how the institution determined need.
- Provide evidence of legal authority for the change if approval is required by the governing board or the state.
- Provide documentation that faculty and appropriate other groups were involved in planning for and approval(s) of the change.

3. **REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR THE SPECIFIC SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE (SELECT THE CHANGE RELEVANT TO THE PROSPECTUS AND PROVIDE ALL INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THAT PARTICULAR CHANGE)**

For a **NEW PROGRAM** provide the following information:

- Provide the curriculum for the program and a projected schedule of course offerings.
- Provide specific programmatic goals (objectives) and specific student learning outcomes for the program.
- Describe how the student learning outcomes **for the program** will be assessed.
- Provide course descriptions for all courses in the proposed program.
- Describe admissions and graduation requirements for the program.
- Demonstrate compliance with FR 4.9 (Definition of Credit Hours) of the *Principles of Accreditation*.
- Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program.
- For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in traditional formats have been achieved.
- Follow instructions in item 4 below for providing information concerning number and qualifications of faculty scheduled to teach in the program.

For a **NEW OFF-CAMPUS SITE OR BRANCH CAMPUS** provide the following information:

- Identify whether the site is a branch campus or an instructional site. The definitions of “branch campus” and “instructional site” may be found on pages 5-6 of the *Principles of Accreditation*. See also Procedure One in the policy entitled [“Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions”](#). **Note: An institution is required to present itself and its sites to SACSCOC in the exact way it presents itself to the U.S. Department of Education.**

- Describe the educational program(s) to be offered at the site or branch. If a program to be offered at the site or branch is a new program requiring approval, also respond to the requirements for a new program listed above.
- Describe any differences in admission, curriculum, or graduation requirements for students enrolled at the new site or branch or any special arrangements for grading, transcripts, or transfer policies.
- Describe how programs at the new site or branch will be monitored and evaluated and how they will be incorporated into the institutional evaluation and assessment processes.
- Describe the administrative structure for overseeing the site or branch campus.
- Describe how services and operations at the new site or branch will be evaluated.
- Follow instructions in item 4 below for providing information concerning number and qualifications of faculty scheduled to teach at the site or branch campus.

**For the OFFERING OF PROGRAM(S) VIA DISTANCE METHODOLOGY (ELECTRONIC OR CORRESPONDENCE) DELIVERY FOR THE FIRST TIME provide the following information:**

- Describe the infrastructure to support distance delivery methods to include the learning management system and administrative structure for electronic delivery.
- Describe how faculty members will be trained in distance delivery methodology and how courses will be developed.
- Describe technical support for students enrolled in courses delivered by distance methods and technical support for faculty members.
- Describe how effectiveness of programs offered via distance delivery will be assessed.
- Document compliance with Comprehensive Standards 4.8.1, 4.8.2, and 4.8.3.
- Follow instructions in item 4 below for providing information concerning number and qualifications of faculty scheduled to teach courses provided by distance methodology.
- Describe processes in place to ensure that students have structured access to faculty members.

**For the INITIATION OF DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAMS provide the following information:**

- Describe the degree completion program to include a description of how the degree completion program differs from the same program offered in traditional format.
- Describe how the institution ensures that student learning outcomes are the same for the program offered as a degree completion program as those for the program offered in traditional format.
- Describe assessment methods for determining achievement of student learning outcomes for the degree completion program.
- Describe admission requirements for students entering the degree completion program.
- Describe the format for offering the degree completion program (for example, compressed format, accelerated format, etc.).
- Follow instructions in item 4 below for providing information concerning number and qualifications of faculty members scheduled to teach in the degree completion program.

#### 4. FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS

- Complete the [Faculty Roster Form](#) for faculty members scheduled to teach in the new program, in a degree completion program, at a new site or branch campus, or in programs to be offered by distance methodology for the first time. Follow directions for completing the form which requires that the institution present the qualifications of each faculty member to teach the courses assigned to them. The [form](#) and [instructions](#) may be accessed at [www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org) under [Institutional Resources](#) or from a link on the [Substantive Change](#) page.
- For a **new program**, the institution must demonstrate that it has at least one qualified faculty member to develop and/or teach discipline courses in the new program. Refer to Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1 in the *Principles* concerning the determination of appropriate qualifications.
- Provide narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members will be adequate to support the initiative and describe the impact on faculty workload of the new program, new site, or distance delivery.
- Document scholarship and research capability of faculty members teaching in graduate programs and document faculty experience in directing student research.

#### 5. LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES

- List and describe discipline-specific learning resources to support a new program. Please do not list all resources located in the library if they do not relate to the specific change.
- Document discipline-specific refereed journals and primary source materials.
- If the institution is reliant on agreements with other libraries, provide a signed copy of each formal agreement and describe how the collections support the program(s).
- Describe specifically how students enrolled in a new program and/or enrolled in a program at an off-campus location and/or enrolled in a distance education program access these discipline-specific learning resources.
- Describe how students and faculty members will access information electronically.
- Describe how faculty and students are instructed in the use of online resources as well as on site library resources.
- Describe resources to support students in access to and use of learning resources.

**Note:** If electronic databases are listed, describe the discipline-specific suites of resources and not just the name of the database or the consortium through which it is accessed (such as Viva, TexShare, Galileo, Louis, etc.).

#### 6. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- Describe specific programs, services, and activities which will support students enrolled in the new program and/or enrolled at a new off-campus site and/or enrolled in distance education programs. Do not list student support services which are not relevant to the specific change.

## 7. PHYSICAL RESOURCES

- Describe the adequacy of physical facilities which will support the change.
- Describe equipment which will be available for a new program or available at a new site.
- Describe the impact that the proposed change will have on physical facilities and equipment for existing programs and services.

## 8. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- Provide a business plan that includes all of the following (**NOTE: This applies to ALL submissions**)
  - (a) a description of financial resources available to support the proposed change, **including a budget** for the first year of the proposed change (**a three-year budget is required for a new branch campus**). Do not send a copy of the entire institutional budget.
  - (b) projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow for the proposed change.
  - (c) the amount of resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services for the proposed change.
  - (d) the operational, management, and physical resources available for the change.
- Provide contingency plans in the event that required resources do not materialize.

**The institution must disclose if it is currently on reimbursement for Title IV funding.**

**Institutions currently on sanction with SACSCOC for financial reasons must provide a copy of the audit for the most recently completed fiscal year.**

## 9. DESCRIPTION OF INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESSES FOR THE CHANGE

- Provide a brief description of institutional assessment processes.
- Describe how the institution will incorporate the change (program, site, distance education or other change) into the institution-wide review and assessment processes.

## 10. APPENDICES

- Appendices may be used in hard copy (print) submissions to provide documentation supporting the narrative in the prospectus.
- **NOTE: In hard copy submission tabs must be provided identifying each appendix (by name or number) referenced in the narrative.**
- Links may be provided in electronic submissions to link to documentation supporting the narrative in the prospectus. **Be sure links allow reviewers to return to the narrative.**

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