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Policy on Substantive Change

1.0 Purpose

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1 requires Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) to notify the Commission of changes and, when required, seek approval prior to their initiation. This document outlines LFCC's Policy on Substantive Change to meet this standard.

2.0 Revision History

Revised September 2013
Revised August 2014
Revised January 2017

3.0 Applicability

This policy formalizes LFCC's process for submitting substantive change documentation to SACSCOC.

4.0 Policy Statement

LFCC will report all substantive changes to SACSCOC in accordance with the SACSCOC publication entitled "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges." An outline of these procedures is attached and LFCC adheres to them in its policy.

5.0 Definitions

A glossary of related terms is attached from the SACSCOC publication. LFCC incorporates these definitions in its policy. Perhaps most important is the definition for significant departure. Significant departure is defined as a program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at LFCC for the mode of delivery in question. A program is significantly different if it requires significant addition of equipment or facilities, financial resources, new courses, new faculty members, and/or library/learning resources.

6.0 Responsibilities

The Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs notifies the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison of a substantive change. The Liaison prepares documentation and a draft letter for the President. The President reviews and approves the submission.

7.0 Procedures

The procedures outlined in the attached SACSCOC publication include information about whether prior notification is required for each type of change, the time frame for contacting the COC, whether prior approval is required, and the format for documentation of the change. Those changes most often encountered at LFCC include the following:

7.1 Expanding at the current degree level (significant departure from current programs)

The COC requires six months prior notification and prior approval from the COC before implementing programs that are a significant departure from current programs.

When LFCC initiates a new associate degree, certificate, or career studies certificate, the following steps are taken:

- The Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs (VP ASA) reviews the proposed program change and determines whether it constitutes a significant departure from current programs.
- If the proposed program is determined to be a significant departure from existing programs, the VP ASA informs the LFCC accreditation liaison at least seven months in advance of the effective date of implementation of the proposed program.
- The accreditation liaison prepares a letter of notification and a prospectus, forwarding these to the President, with a copy to the VP ASA, for review and signature.
- The President sends the notification and prospectus to SACSCOC by mail at least six months in advance of the program implementation date.
- The proposed program is initiated after written approval from SACSCOC.

7.2 Closing a program or approved off-campus site

SACSCOC requires notification of the intended closing of an associate degree, certificate, career studies certificate, or approved off-campus site, and a teach-out plan for approval. This includes teach-out agreements with other institutions.

When LFCC decides to close a program or off-campus site, the following steps are taken:

- The Academic Dean works with the VP ASA to develop a teach-out plan that provides all relevant information about the date of closure, notification of students, and teach-out procedures.
- The draft teach-out plan is reviewed and approved by the VP ASA, then forwarded to the President for review and signature as part of the SACSCOC notification of discontinuance.
- The President sends the letter of notification, including the teach-out plan, to SACSCOC.
- The program is officially closed after SACSCOC approves the notification.

7.3 Initiating new off-campus sites (including dual enrollment programs at high schools)

SACSCOC requires at least three month prior notification and prior approval before initiating off-campus sites at which students can obtain 50 percent or more credits towards an associate degree, certificate or career studies certificate. Notification is no longer required when sites offer between 25 and 49% of a program.

Once an off-campus site has been approved, other programs can be offered at that site with no further notification to SACSCOC, unless the additional program is significantly different from the programs already approved, in which case SACSCOC should be notified.

Where students can obtain 50 percent or more of a program, the Accreditation liaison prepares a full Prospectus for the COC and forwards a draft letter and the Prospectus to the President for review and signature. The President sends the Prospectus to the COC three months in advance of the date at which 50 percent or more of the credits towards a program are to be offered. In the case of dual enrollment high schools, a modified Prospectus with three months in advance is required.

Timely notification in regard to off-campus sites depends on communication about planning for potential new sites and regular reviews of anticipated off-campus course offerings. Academic deans will notify the VP ASA and the Accreditation liaison before changing the location (site) of a class after the schedule has been posted/published for the semester, or adding off-campus classes to a previously posted/published schedule. All such changes and additions must be approved by the VP ASA before they are implemented. The courses will not be offered unless written approval from the COC has been received.

7.4 Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium

The COC requires notification prior to implementation of programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium. The following steps are taken:

- The VP ASA notifies the accreditation liaison of any such agreement prior to implementation.
- The Accreditation liaison prepares a letter of notification for the COC and forwards the letter to the President for review and signature.
- The President sends the notification to the COC prior to implementation of the courses.

7.5 Altering significantly the length of a program

The COC requires six months prior notification and prior approval from the COC before significantly altering the length of a program. The following steps are taken:

- The VP ASA notifies the Accreditation liaison of any such change to the length of a program at least seven months prior to implementation.

- The Accreditation liaison prepares a prospectus for the COC and forwards the letter to the President for review and signature.
- The President sends the prospectus to the COC six months prior to implementation of the courses.

7.6 Adding a distance learning program

LFCC has been approved by SACSCOC for electronic delivery of 50 percent or more of a program's credits. Distance learning course offerings are regularly monitored in order to identify and notify the COC in advance of new programs which represent a substantive change.

Since LFCC is already approved for distance learning, existing programs may be expanded with online delivery without the need for a substantive change submission. However, if a new program is offered online that is not already offered traditionally in the classroom, this may represent a substantive change, especially if it involves new courses, resources, and faculty. This requires LFCC to submit a substantive change prospectus to SACSCOC at least six months prior to implementing the change in online program delivery.

7.7 Other substantive changes

The President, the VP ASA, and the Accreditation liaison are responsible for monitoring LFCC's status in regard to all other substantive changes and coordinating the appropriate notification to the COC, as specified by COC policy. The Director of High School Outreach regularly monitors course offerings at dual enrollment high schools and is responsible for notifying the VP ASA and the Accreditation Liaison when thresholds of 25% and 50% of a program are met.

Other substantive changes specified by COC policy include: initiating courses or programs at more advanced or lower levels than currently approved, initiating a branch campus, initiating a merger/consolidation, significantly altering the educational mission of the institution, relocating a campus, initiating degree completion programs, direct assessment CBE, and changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status.

Direct assessment, competency-based education (CBE) is a substantive change. Additional programs which are CBE, but delivered through course-based, credit-based format require notification and are not considered to be substantive changes per se per the current SACSCOC policy.

The College's accreditation liaison is responsible for notifying senior administrators when there have been changes to the SACSCOC substantive change policy. The College' accreditation will modify this LFCC policy accordingly.

7.8 Steps for implementing substantive change

1. Deans will send a list of proposed list of new locations and of new courses at off-site locations to the VP ASA by February 15 for following summer and fall semesters, and by September 15 for the following spring semester.
2. Once this list has been sent, academic deans will notify the VP ASA before adding additional online or off-site courses. Any such additional offerings must be approved by the VP ASA before being added to the schedule.
3. The VP ASA's office will send proposed new courses to the Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness by February 15, and September 15.
4. The Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness will run an automated report process and conduct an analysis of the results about the percentage of credit course offerings towards all programs at non-approved sites and the percentage of credit course offerings towards programs that are significantly different from already approved programs at approved sites. The data for this analysis are based on PeopleSoft queries.
5. The Director of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness prepares a list of the results of this review, reporting the percentages towards each program listed above, and sending this list to the VP ASA.
6. For substantive changes involving notification letters, the accreditation liaison prepares letters and sends these to the President for review and signature, with a copy to the VP ASA. The president sends the signed letters to the COC.
7. For substantive changes requiring a prospectus and approval, the accreditation liaison prepares a prospectus and accompanying letter, sends it to the VP ASA for review, and then sends these to the President for review and signature. The President sends the prospectus to the COC six months prior to the implementation (which in most cases can be considered the date at which 50 percent or more of the program is offered). The courses will not be offered unless written approval from the COC has been received.

In addition, LFCC will adhere to the reporting requirements for types of substantive change documented in the most recent version of the Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement. The types of substantive change and a glossary of terms are amended as part of this LFCC policy.

8.0 Sanctions

None

9.0 Interpretation

Authority for interpretation of this policy rests with the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs.

10.0 Authority/Reference

This policy was developed following the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy found at <http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp>

Glossary of Terms

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

- permanent in nature
- offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential
- has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization and
- has its own budgetary and hiring authority

Contractual Agreement – typically is one in which an institution enters an agreement for receipt of courses/programs or portions of courses or programs (i.e., clinical training internships, etc.) delivered by another institution or service provider.

Consortial Relationship - A consortial relationship typically is one in which two or more institutions share in the responsibility of developing and delivering courses and programs that meet mutually agreed upon standards of academic quality.

Correspondence education - a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced.

Degree completion program – a program typically designed for a non-traditional undergraduate population such as working adults who have completed some college-level course work but have not achieved a baccalaureate degree. Students in such programs may transfer in credit from courses taken previously and may receive credit for experiential learning. Courses in degree completion programs are often offered in an accelerated format or meet during evening and weekend hours, or may be offered via distance learning technologies.

Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs - Federal regulations define a direct assessment competency-based educational program as an 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.

Distance education - a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

Dual degree – separate program completion credentials each of which bears only the name, seal, and signature of the institution awarding the degree to the student.

Educational program – a coherent course of study leading to the awarding of a credential (i.e., a degree, diploma or certificate).

Geographically separate - an instructional site or branch campus that is located physically apart from the main campus of the institution.

Joint degree - a single program completion credential bearing the names, seals, and signatures of each of the two or more institutions awarding the degree to the student.

Modified prospectus - a prospectus submitted in lieu of a full prospectus for certain designated substantive changes. When a modified prospectus is acceptable, the Commission specifies requested information from the institution.

Notification - a letter from an institution's chief executive officer, or his/her designated representative, to SACSCOC President summarizing a proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the complete physical address if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site or branch campus. The policy and procedures for reporting and review of institutional substantive change are outlined in the document "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges."

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 will be required?
- Will a significant number of new faculty members will be required?
- Will significant additional library/learning resources be needed?

Teach-out agreement - a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50% or more of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Such a teach-out agreement requires SACSCOC approval in advance of implementation.

Teach-out plan - a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides 50% or more of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions. This applies to the closure of an institution, a site, or a program. Teach-out plans must be approved by SACSCOC in advance of implementation.

Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are included in the table that follows. Please read the full text under the appropriate procedure for details regarding reporting.

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating coursework or programs at a different level than currently approved	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: March 15 (for June review) September 1 (for December review)
Initiating off-campus sites where student can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program (including but not limited to Early College High School, dual enrollment programs offered at a high school, and certificate programs that are not at employer's request and not on short notice)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of this document) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation
Expanding at current degree level (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>).				
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site AND at the institution				
Initiating degree completion programs				
Initiating a branch campus (See definition of "branch campus" on p. 3 of this document.)				
Initiating distance learning by offering 50% or more of the first program for the first time				
Relocating a main or branch campus				
Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides 25% or more of an educational program offered by the SACSCOC accredited institution				

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating dual or joint degrees involving program expansion (significant departure) or initiating a new site where student can obtain 50% or more credits toward a program	See SACSCOC policy “ Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards ”	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Prospectus (See Appendix B of this document) Due dates: January 1 for 7/1-12/31 implementation July 1 for 1/1-6/30 implementation Copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution, and additional details on non-SACSCOC institution(s) involved. See Policy
Initiating dual or joint degree with at least one institution <u>not</u> accredited by SACSCOC	See SACSCOC Policy “ Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards ”	At least 6 months prior to implementation	Yes	Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement, contact information for each institution, and additional details on non-SACSCOC institution(s). See Policy.
Initiating a direct assessment competency-based program	See SACSCOC Policy “ Direct Assessment Competency-Based Educational Programs ”	Yes – Screening Form	Yes	Submit “Screening Form” with letter of notification. If Prospectus is required, Due dates: March 15 (for June review) September 1 (for December review)
<p>Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution</p> <p>Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution</p> <p>Acquiring any program or site from another institution</p> <p>Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out for students from another institution that is closing</p>	See SACSCOC Policy: “ Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status ”	Yes: December 15 (for June review); June 1 (for December review)	Yes	Cover Sheet Institutional Summary Form Prospectus (See Appendix in SACSCOC Policy: “ Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance, Control, Form, or Legal Status ”) Due dates: March 15 (for June review); September 1 (for December review)

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating a certificate program at a new off-campus site at employer's request and on short notice (previously approved program)	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Cover Sheet Modified prospectus Contact Commission Staff.
Initiating a certificate program that is a significant departure from previously approved programs at employer's request and on short notice				
Adding a site under a U.S. military contract for a previously approved program				
Altering significantly the length of a program				
Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution				
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	Procedure 1	No	Yes	Justify reasons for change, indicate calculation of equivalency, and other pertinent information
Moving an off-campus instructional site (serving the same geographic area)	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification with old address, new address, and implementation date
Initiating dual or joint degrees with other SACSCOC accredited institution(s)	See SACSCOC Policy " Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards "	At least 6 months prior to implementation	No	Acceptance of notification, copy of signed agreement and contact information for each institution. See Policy.
Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement
Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs if the entity provides less than 25% of an educational program offered by the SACSCOC accredited institution				

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating off-campus sites where student can obtain 25-49% of credits toward a program (including but not limited to Early College High School, dual enrollment programs offered at a high school, and certificate programs that are not at employer's request and not on short notice)	Procedure 2	Yes	No	Letter of notification Including street address and implementation date
Initiating distance learning by offering 25-49 of the first program for the first time				
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution where the institution plans to teach out its own students	Procedure 3	Yes	Yes	Description of teach-out plan included with letter of notification
Closing a program, approved off-campus site, branch campus, or institution where the institution plans contracts with another institution(s) to teach-out students (Teach-out Agreement)	Procedure 3	Yes	Yes	Description of teach-out plan, copy of signed teach-out agreement(s) detailing terms included with notification

Types of Change	Procedure or Policy	Prior Notification Required	Prior Approval Required	Documentation and Time Frame for Contacting SACSCOC
Initiating a certificate program at employer's request and on short notice using existing approved courses and location	NA	No	No	NA
Initiating certificate program (not at employer's request and not on short notice) using existing approved courses and location				
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School and dual enrollment programs offered at the high school) where student can obtain 24% or less of credits toward a program				
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding approved programs that ARE NOT significantly different from current programs at the site				
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites by adding approved programs that ARE significantly different from current programs at the site but NOT at the institution				
Initiating distance learning by offering 24% or less of any program for the first time				