**Academic Procedures & Regulations (APR) 17: Curriculum Guide**

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# COURSES

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| Curriculum form(s) related to developing a new course: COURSE FORM (previously called “AA5 Course Proposal Change” or “AA4 Simple Course Change).”  *\*All curriculum forms should be initiated via Curriculog: ADD LINK. Deadlines for each level of the approval process are embedded within the system.* |

1. Course Prefixes

The prefixes used to designate courses, except in the case of very short names such as art, are abbreviations of the names of departments or of fields of study within the departments.

1. Numbering System

Each course is identified by a course prefix and a three-digit number. The first digit of the number designates the level of the course and indicates the minimum class rank a student should have achieved to enroll in the course.

Undergraduate students may not enroll in graduate level courses for either undergraduate or graduate credit except under the conditions specified in the graduate catalog. In such cases, the student must meet graduate-level requirements to receive credit.

Courses numbered 293, 294, 393, 394, 493, 494, 593, 594, 693 or 694 are for special topics that reflect a student’s or faculty member’s special interest not covered by regular departmental curriculum offerings. Credit in these courses varies from one to four credit hours, to be determined by the department for each offering. Students may take up to 12 hours of special topic credit in a single department/program. A particular topic course can be taught at most two times in a five-year period. If a department/program wishes to teach a particular topic course more than twice in a five-year period, it must propose the course as a regular course, subject to the curriculum review process.

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| 01-100 |  | Noncredit courses which are not applicable to degrees |
| 101-199 |  | Courses for freshmen |
| 190-199 |  | First-Year Seminar courses |
| 200-299 |  | Courses for sophomores |
| 300-399 |  | Courses for juniors |
| 400-499 |  | Courses for seniors |
| 500-799 |  | Masters-level courses |
| 800-999 |  | Doctoral-level courses |

The number 389 is reserved for cooperative education undergraduate courses, and the number 589 is reserved for cooperative education graduate courses.

Within the sequences 480-499, 580-599, 680-699, and 780-799, the second and third digits of the numbers are assigned to special types of courses:

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| 80-82 |  | Independent study and directed-readings courses |
| 83-89 |  | Internships, practicum, and special applied field projects |
| 90-92 |  | Student teaching |
| 93-94 |  | Special topics courses |
| 95-98 |  | Seminars |
| 699 |  | Thesis |
| 779 |  | Continuing Research - Non-Thesis Option |
| 799 |  | Continuing Research - Thesis Option |
| 999 |  | Continuing Research – Dissertation |

1. Credits and Class Meetings

Colleges should ensure that credit hours awarded for work adhere to the SACSCOC Policy Statement ([http://www.SACSCOCcoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf](http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Credit%20Hours.pdf%20) ) on credit hours and the federal definition of a credit hour below. In determining credit hours awarded for online courses, learning outcomes and the amount of work should be equivalent to credit hours awarded for traditional face-to-face courses.

**Federal Definition of the Credit Hour.** For purposes of the application of this policy and in accordance with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates the following guidelines.

* Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. OR,
* At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

According to the UNC Policy Manual: 400.1.6—“all UNC campuses must ensure that every course offered for academic credit adheres to the standard of a minimum of 750 scheduled minutes of instructional time or the equivalent per credit hour. The time may include required examination periods, but may not include study days. In setting the academic calendar for each semester, campuses may set holiday periods, study days, and final examinations appropriate to accommodate the scheduled classes. In no case may a campus set a calendar that has optional final examinations if the time is considered a part of the required minimum class time.”

Unless otherwise indicated at the end of the course description, the number of hours a class meets each week is the same as the credit-hour value of the course. The credit-hour value of each course is indicated in parentheses immediately following its title. For example, if 3 hours of credit may be earned, the credit is indicated as (3). In variable credit courses, the minimum and maximum hours are shown as (1-3). Unless repeat credit is specified in the course description, a course may be applied only once toward the hours required for graduation. The availability of a course for repeat credit and the maximum hours that may be earned are indicated within the parentheses and immeditately following the credit-hour value of the course as follows: (3, R6). In this example, the course carries 3 hours of credit and may be repeated once for a total maximum of 6 hours applicable toward a degree.

Credit is awarded in experiential courses on the basis of a minimum of three contact hours per credit hour.

1. Course Descriptions

Course descriptions should be no more than 100 words. This length does not include prerequisites, corequisites, or S/U grading, or other wording not pertaining to the description. See section IV for consultation form requirements.

1. Prerequisites and Corequisites

A prerequisite (PREQ) is any special requirement, usually one or more background courses or requirements other than class rank that must be met before enrolling in a course specifying the prerequisite. A corequisite (COREQ) is any course, which must be taken during the same term as the course that specifies the corequisite.

* A course prerequisite cannot be a higher level or number (e.g., 100-200 or 123-124) than the course itself.
* Anytime you add or delete a prerequisite that has a prefix other than your department, you must consult with that department as you make changes to your course and the consultation form should be attached. For example, if BIOL 233 uses CHEM 130 as a prerequisite and you want to delete BIOL 233, the Chemistry department needs to be consulted. This lets the Chemistry department know you no longer offer this course and also that they will not need to offer additional sections of CHEM 130.

1. Experiential Courses

Western Carolina University (WCU) endorses the concept of education as a multidimensional process of learning that incorporates study and practice. To that end, its curricula are designed to provide for acquisition of knowledge and understanding of theory combined with opportunities for experience in practical applications in real settings. Many of the degree programs included required work in professional situations specific to the positions and career areas for which the students are preparing.

* **Cooperative Education.** Courses in which students combine academic study with career-related work experience while pursuing a degree. Designed to be an integral part of the educational experience.
* **Internships and Practicums.** A broad range of full-time and part-time learning opportunities are provided through internships, practica, field courses, and clinical affiliations for periods of one or more semesters. These courses allow students to gain experience in the actual practice of a profession and to develop mastery of the tasks, skills and theory applications in career fields pertinent to their majors.
* **Independent Study.** Courses offered by departments. The content and criteria for each course is determined by each academic department and credits range from one to six semester hours.

The maximum credit in experiential courses that may be applied toward a degree within the minimum of 120 or 128 hours required in all bachelors’ programs is 26 semester hours (20 percent). The maximum credit that may be earned in cooperative education or applied field project courses/internships or in any combination of the two is 15 hours.

1. Special Topics Course Policy

Courses numbered 293, 294, 393, 394, 493, 494, 593, 594, 693 or 694 are for special topics that reflect a student’s or faculty member’s special interest not covered by regular departmental curriculum offerings. Credit in these courses varies from one to four credit hours, to be determined by the department for each offering. Students may take up to 12 hours of special topic credit in a single department/program. A particular topic course can be taught at most two times in a five-year period. If a department/program wishes to teach a particular topic course more than twice in a five year period, it must propose the course as a regular course, subject to the curriculum review process. **Do not delete the special topics number when developing a new course.**

1. Liberal Studies Courses

The category of Liberal Studies (LS) to which each course applies may be found in the Liberal Studies requirements section of the catalog. The applicable category is indicated at the end of each course description.

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| **Core** | | |  | **Perspectives** | | |  |
| C1 |  | Writing | 6 hrs | P1 |  | Social Sciences | 6 hrs |
| C2 |  | Mathematics | 3 hrs | P2 |  | (P2 no longer exists; added to P1) | |
| C3 |  | Oral Communication | 3 hrs | P3 |  | History | 3 hrs |
| C4 |  | Wellness | 3 hrs | P4 |  | Humanities | 3 hrs |
| C5 |  | Physical and Biological Sciences | 6 hrs | P5 |  | Fine and Performing Arts | 3 hrs |
| FYS |  | First Year Seminar | 3 hrs | P6 |  | World Cultures | 3 hrs |

Any LS course being proposed (new or changing an existing course) requires a completed LS course proposal form (via Curriculog). The syllabus must also reflect the LS objectives for that particular LS program category. Liberal Studies resources: <http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/liberal-studies-program/liberal-studies-resources-for-faculty/index.asp>.

1. Approval Process

Courses will be developed in accordance with the curriculum approval process of the university and will include the following:

1. Initiation of a course or course change proposal by an academic department via Curriculog.
2. All courses proposals must seek consultation from other similar programs or programs related in any way to the proposal.
3. Approval by appropriate department and college curriculum committee(s) as well as the relevant department head and dean/designee.
4. Review and approval by the appropriate university level curriculum committee(s)-- Liberal Studies Committee, University Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council, and/or Professional Education Council. University level curriculum committees provide recommendations to the Academic Policy and Review Council (APRC). The APRC moves items forward to the Faculty Senate.
5. Approval by the Faculty Senate.
6. Approval by the Provost/designee.
7. Reviewing/Deleting Courses

Each department is charged with routinely reviewing courses to determine those not taught within the past five years. In cases where courses have not been taught, departments should consider deleting those courses. The COURSE CHANGE form is utilized to delete a course through the curriculum process via Curriculog.

# II. DEGREE PROGRAMS

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| **Curriculum forms related to programs**:   * Appendix A Authorization to Plan Coversheet (WCU document) AND Request for Authorization to Plan a New Degree Program (GA document) * Appendix C Request for Authorization to Establish a New Degree Program (GA document) * Appendix F Notification of Intent to Plan a New Distance Education Program (for distance, site-based Education or online programs) (GA document) * Appendix G Request for Authorization to Establish a New Distance Education Program or Site (for distance site based or online programs) (GA document) * Distance Education Impact Assessment (WCU document) * PROGRAM FORM (previously call Education “AA6 Program Proposal/Change” * Information Sheet for Proposing programs in Buncombe County, if applicable (WCU document)   *\*All curriculum forms should be initiated via Curriculog: ADD LINK. Deadlines for each level of the approval process are embedded within the system.* |

Academic Review and approval processes for new programs begins at campus level and eventually requires approval from or notification to UNC General Administration (GA) and/or SACSCOC. Processes and timelines at UNC GA for the submission, review and approval of new baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral programs are delineated in flowcharts in Addendum B. SACSCOC policies and requirements are described in Addendum C: Substantive Change Policy for SACSCOC.

## Establishing New Program Priorities

UNC GA implemented a revised academic program review process in a June 12, 2012, memorandum to recommend that no more than three new academic program proposals be active in the planning process (that is, submitted to UNC GA) at any one time. **In order to be considered, a new academic program must be one of the top three priorities.** A campus may include in the list the new 2- 3 program priorities in rank order for information purposes.

Further information regarding new program development can be found at the UNC GA website: <https://www.northcarolina.edu/?q=academic-affairs/academic-planning>.

The process described below will be used to develop the Campus Academic Program Priorities List.

1. In early fall of each year, the Office of the Provost will make a call to the academic deans requesting the names of any new programs being considered at the college level. Informal feedback and discussion of potential new programs will occur at the Provost’s Council.
2. The proposal of new programs should follow the process described above for requesting Appendic A, Authorization to Plan a New Degree Program, and the accompanying cover sheet.
3. By the end of the first week in April, the Office of the Provost will submit the names of all new programs that have been approved for authorization to plan through the WCU curricular process (not yet submitted to GA). The Academic Policy and Review Council (APRC) will review the list of proposed new programs and make recommendations on their priority to the Faculty Senate for consideration and recommendation.
4. The Provost’s Council will review and discuss the list of programs approved for authorization to plan by the on-campus process and the priority list recommendations of the Faculty Senate. Based on this information, the Provost’s Council will make recommendations on the priority of new programs to submit to GA.
5. The final priorities list will be reviewed and approved by the provost and chancellor prior to submission to UNC GA.

## **Basic Program Requirements (undergraduate**)

* 1. No less than 120 hours and no more than 128 hours are required for programs.
  2. The range of hours for a concentration is 16-24.
  3. Majors with 27-45 hours must also require a minor, second major, or other approved program.
  4. Majors with 46-64 hours do not require a minor or second major.
  5. Fifty percent of courses required in the major have to be at the 300-400 level (must petition for exemption to this rule when proposing the program).
  6. Twenty five percent of the total degree program required hours must be at the 300-400 level.

## **Basic Program Requirements (graduate)**

1. Fifty percent of the credit hours for a master’s degree must be 600 level or above.
2. Fifty percent of the credit hours for the education specialist’s degree must be 700 level or above.
3. At least 24 hours must be earned as resident credit hours (teacher education requires one semester of full time graduate work—summer may be counted as one of the semesters—see Graduate Catalog for exceptions).
4. Graduate degrees must be completed within six years.

## College and University Level Review and Approval Process for New Programs

* 1. The Appendix A (and accompanying cover sheet) or F is developed by the department.
  2. The eight-semester plan for completing the program is developed by the department and attached to Appendix A (will eventually be posted on the website for the degree program---and no longer posted in the catalog).
  3. Once approved by the dean, Appendix A (and accompanying cover sheet) or F is submitted to the associate provost to place on the Provost’s Council agenda. If endorsed by the Provost’s Council, a PROGRAM FORM, Appendix A (and accompanying cover sheet) or F is submitted through the campus curriculum approval process via Curriculog.
  4. Once Faculty Senate approves the program proposal, the Appendix A or F is electronically submitted to UNC GA by the Office of the Provost. See Addendum B for UNC GA process and timeline of Appendix A and F. **Departs/colleges should begin working on Appendix C or G**.
  5. The Office of the Provost notifies the department and college when UNC GA approves the Appendix A or F and directs the department/college to submit Appendix C or G via Curriculog. (Note: The Appendix C is due to UNC GA within four months of the invitation to submit. Once submitted via Curriculog, the appendix will be routed directly to the Provost’s Office for review.).
  6. Appendix C is reviewed and approved by the provost and chancellor prior to submission to UNC GA. The Office of the Provost notifies departments when the Appendix C has been approved by the provost and chancellor. At this point, the departments submit the COURSE and PROGRAM FORMS through the campus curriculum approval process via Curriculog. The provost’s office will simultaneously submit the Appendix C to UNC GA. See Addendum B for UNC GA process and timeline of Appendix C review.

## Approval Process for Distance Programs Already Approved as Residential

1. The Distance Education Impact Assessment form is completed by the department.
2. The dean submits the Distance Education Impact Assessment form to the associate provost to place on the Provost’s Council agenda.
3. Once endorsed by the Provost’s Council, the department completes an Appendix F and G and submits both forms to the dean, and the dean’s designee will submit Appendix F and G to the associate provost for review.
4. At the time of submission of Appendix F and G to the Associate Provost, the department and college will simultaneously submit a PROGRAM FORM to propose the distance program through the university curriculum process via Curriculog. The PROGRAM CHANGE should clearly indicate if the program will remain residential in addition to being a distance program, or if it will be a distance program only. The Appendix F, G and consultation forms from all departments involved in the program curriculum should also be submitted via Curriculog. (Note: If the residential program is becoming inactive, a separate PROGRAM CHANGE with Appendix D attached is needed for inactivation or deletion.)
5. The provost reviews and approves Appendix F and G and submits to UNC GA according to the established timeline. Appendix F is submitted at least 30 days prior to Appendix G. Appendix G is submitted to GA after the PROGRAM CHANGE has been approved through the university process.
6. When the PROGRAM CHANGE has been approved through the university process and UNC GA has approved the distance program, the PROGRAM CHANGE is submitted to the registrar’s office for final processing and updates are made to the proposed catalog.

## Discontinuing Programs

Appendix D must be completed for programs that will be deleted. Appendix D is moved through the curriculum process via Curriculog. The Provost’s Office submits Appendix D to UNC GA.

# III. CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

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| **Curriculum form(s) related to developing a certificate program**:   * Appendix A Authorization to Plan Coversheet or Needs Assessment Impact Assessment (if a distance program - WCU Document) * PROGRAM CHANGE (WCU Document) * Info Sheet for Proposing Programs in Buncombe County, if applicable (WCU Document)   *\*All curriculum forms should be initiated via Curriculog: ADD LINK. Deadlines for each level of the approval process are embedded within the system.* |

A certificate program of study is an approved core of courses designed to provide the student with expanded competencies and knowledge. Certificate programs serve as an important vehicle in workforce development, career change and interdisciplinary collaboration among academic programs and organizations.

## Characteristics

* Post-Masters Graduate Certificate
  + A credit program offering advanced courses at 600/700 level.
  + Focused study on a particular aspect of a master’s-level degree program.
  + Requires candidates have an earned master’s degree in a related field of study.
  + Requires a minimum of 12 credit hours. To be counted toward performance based funding a minimum of 24 credit hours is required.
* Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate
  + A credit program offering courses at the 500/600 level.
  + Requires candidates have an earned baccalaureate degree.
  + Designed to provide transition to a related master’s degree or stand alone as an independent program.
  + Requires a minimum of 12 credit hours to be counted toward performance based funding a minimum of 18 credit hours is required.
* Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Certificate
  + A credit program that may include courses from various levels from one or more disciplines.
  + Candidates must have a minimum of 60 credit hours for acceptance into the program if the certificate can be completed with 400 level courses.
  + Courses offered may be selected as electives or constitute a minor for undergraduate students.
  + Courses may be dually listed as 400/500 level courses.
  + Requires a minimum of 12 credits.
  + Courses may draw from one or more disciplines.
  + Program is not designed as transitional to a master’s degree; coursework in this program will not apply to a graduate program of study.

Certificate programs should not serve as a substitute for an existing program or compete with an existing program. Further, certificate programs should be consistent with the mission of the university and that of the academic units. The guidelines outlined below are designed to apply to those certificate programs comprised of upper level undergraduate study and graduate coursework, and do not cover licensure, pre-med, and other programs that are typically completed at the baccalaureate level.

## Certificate Curriculum Requirements

All certificate programs must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Certificate programs generally require between 12 and 24 semester hours of coursework. At least half of this coursework must be at a level higher than that of entry. Certificate programs, which exceeded 30 semester hours, will only be approved under unusual circumstances.
2. The coursework comprising the certificate program must be integrated and organized in a sequence of study approved by the sponsoring departments.
3. Unless otherwise stipulated the regular grading scales for undergraduate and graduate courses are to be used.
4. No more than one independent project should be included in the approved program of study for completion of the certificate.
5. Minimum grade standards for interdisciplinary programs will be defined by the sponsoring academic unit, subject to the following: students in a graduate (post-master’s or post-baccalaureate) certificate program must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in all graduate certificate coursework.
6. A student may apply coursework from a certificate program toward a degree offered at WCU with the approval of the department offering the degree. Certificates that may accrue to or fulfill the requirements of a minor must be approved concurrently with approval of the certificate.

## Certificate Programs Approval Process

Certificate programs will be developed in accordance with the program development and curriculum approval process of the university and will include the following:

1. Initiation of the proposal by an academic department. Approval by the Provost’s Council. The dean should submit the proposal to the associate provost to be placed on the agenda. If endorsed by the Provost’s Council, the proposal continues through the curriculum process via Curriculog.
2. All certificate programs must seek consultation from other similar programs or programs related in any way to the proposal.
3. Completion of a needs assessment along with the PROGRAM CHANGE form (may use the Cover Sheet to Appendix A as the needs assessment for resident programs or the Impact Assessment form for distance programs).
4. Approval by appropriate department and college curriculum committee(s) as well as the relevant department head and dean.
5. Review and approval by Educational Outreach, if applicable (distance and online programs)—this is accomplished through completion of the Impact Assessment form.
6. Review and approval by the appropriate university level curriculum committee(s)-- Liberal Studies Committee, University Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council, and/or Professional Education Council. University level curriculum committees provide recommendations to the Academic Policy and Review Council (APRC). The APRC moves items forward to the Faculty Senate.
7. Approval by the Faculty Senate.
8. Approval by the Provost/designee.
9. Notification to UNC GA to add the certificate program to WCU’s program inventory.

## Admission Standards For Certificate Programs

The sponsoring academic unit will be responsible for establishing admission standards, in accordance with university admissions standards and subject to the following guidelines:

1. Candidates for post-master’s certificates must have a master’s degree in a relevant field.
2. Candidates for post-baccalaureate certificates must have completed at least a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accrediteded institution.
3. Candidates for interdisciplinary undergraduate certificates must have a minimum of 60 undergraduate credits from a regionally accredited education institution and a recommended minimum GPA of 2.5 for acceptance to programs at the undergraduate level. Undergraduate students at the upper level may take courses in the interdisciplinary certificate program or complete the certificate program as a minor.

## Administration of Certificate Programs

All certificate programs will be reviewed two years after initiation and then become part of the ongoing program review process. The director of assessment shall report the results of these reviews to the academic units, Graduate Council (as appropriate), Educational Outreach (as appropriate) and the provost.

* The program, wherever it may be administratively housed, must be clearly identified and labeled as a certificate program. The intent of the program must be specified in the academic unit’s literature.
* A faculty advisor will be appointed for each certificate program. The advisor will be responsible for certifying the successful completion of the program’s academic requirements.
* The Graduate School will communicate with the registrar for recording the completed graduate certificate on the student’s transcript.
* Undergraduate certificate program completion will be communicated to the registrar by the academic advisor.
* All changes to approved certificate programs must be sent through the same curriculum approval process as other program changes.

# IV. CONSULTATION FORMS

Many academic programs consist of courses offered by departments other than their own. Changes that are planned to curriculum might have an impact on other departments. Consultation forms must be submitted from the library (for new courses or programs) as well as any other department affected by the course proposal or change. Some of the reasons for consultations may be:

* Course proposal has similar content to content in another department.
* Course proposal has prerequisite/corequisite from another department.
* Course proposal impacts another major from a different department.
* Course proposal might be of particular interest to another department to list as an elective choice.

# V. PROPOSING PROGRAMS TO BE OFFEREDUCATION IN ASHEVILLE OR BUNCOMBE COUNTY

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| **Curriculum form(s) related to proposing programs to be offered in Asheville or Buncombe County**:   * Info Sheet for Proposing Programs in Buncombe County (WCU Document)   *\*All curriculum forms should be initiated via Curriculog: ADD LINK. Deadlines for each level of the approval process are embedded within the system.* |

Consultation between UNCA and WCU Provosts is required (per the 2012 MOU between the institutions) prior to WCU’s offering a program in Biltmore Park, Asheville or any location in Buncombe County.

Guidelines for submitting this form:

1. For new program proposals not currently in WCU’s approved academic inventory, attach the form to the Intent to Plan Cover Sheet and Appendix A when submitting a new program proposal.
2. If this program is currently in WCU’s approved academic inventory, the college dean should submit the form to the associate provost to be placed on the agenda.

# VI. ITEMS THAT REQUIRE APPROVAL FROM OR NOTIFICATION TO UNC GENERAL ADMINISTRATION AND/OR SACSCOC

The following is a listing of items that require approval from or notification to UNC GA or SACSCOC. Academic departments and units should consult with the provost’s office with any questions or concerns.

* New degree programs
* New certificate programs
* Discontinuation or deletion of programs (degree/certificate)
* Program title changes (degree/certificate)
* Program delivery change (e.g., from resident to distance)
* Discontinuation of site-based location for a program
* Discontinuation of an online program without discontinuation of a residence program
* Adding a location of a program

For more complete information regarding SACSCOC requirements see Addendum B: Substantive Change Policy (SACSCOC).

ADDENDUM A: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION PROCESSES AND TIMELINES FOR NEWPROGRAMS

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# ADDENDUM B: SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY (SACSCOC)

**Purpose**

Western Carolina Commission on Colleges recognizes the importance of compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions* (SACSCOC, 2013)[[1]](#footnote-2), which requires WCU to report ALL substantive changes accurately and in a timely manner to the Commission on Colleges. The purpose of this policy is to describe the process and procedures to be utilized to ensure that WCU complies with this Commission on Colleges policy.

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy: <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Substantive%20Change%20policy.pdf>.

**Scope**

WCU’s *Substantive Change Compliance Policy* applies to EACH academic unit and department and is MANDATORY.

**Definition of "Substantive Change"**

Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes

* Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
* Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
* The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
* The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution’s current accreditation or reaffirmation.
* A change from clock hours to credit hours
* A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
* The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program.
* The establishment of a branch campus
* Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
* Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement that includes only the initiation of a dual or joint academic program with another institution
* Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
* Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
* Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution’s programs

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees has approved additional substantive changes that require notification and, in some cases, approval prior to implementation. This policy and its procedures address substantive changes identified through Federal regulations and Board approval.

More important for deans and department heads are examples of substantive changes that might typically originate with proposals from department or academic program leadership including:

* Expanding programs at current degree level;
* Initiating joint degrees with another institution;
* Initiating a certificate program (example: continuing Education credit) at employer's request and on short notice;
* Initiating other certificate programs;
* Initiating off-campus sites;
* Relocating an off-campus instructional site;
* Initiating online programs or other programs where the faculty and students are not in the same location that are significantly different from current online offerings;
* Initiating degree completion programs;
* Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium;
* Entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs;
* Acquiring any program or site from another institution;
* Altering the length of a program significantly; and
* Closing a program or approved off-campus site.

**The initiation or relocation of off-campus instructional sites and the addition of new programs that represent significant departures from current offerings are the MOST COMMONLY reported education substantive changes.** A "significant departure" is one in which the proposed new program has no closely related counterpart among the previously approved education programs in the curriculum. To determine whether a new program is a "significant departure," the Commission on Colleges considers whether the new program requires significant amounts of additional faculty, courses, library or other learning resources, equipment or facilities, or financial resources.

**Policy**

The process that WCU will use to ensure compliance with the *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions* documentinvolves the following four methods: 1) implementing effective communication and procedures, 2) providing adequate resources, 3) conducting periodic training, and 4) utilizing quality assurance safeguards.

**Communication and Procedures**

* Detailed procedures regarding all internal and external (UNC General Administration and SACSCOC) academic program planning and revision processes are found in WCU’s *Academic Procedure and Regulation (APR 17)* and *Faculty Handbook*, especially Sections 13.00 and 14.00 (<http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/resources-for-faculty-and-staff/index.asp>).
* Academic units follow the procedures outlined in *APR 17* and in the *Handbook* to obtain internal approval for substantive changes.
* The Office of the Provost (specifically, the associate provost) alerts the university SACSCOC accreditation liaison regarding any curricular decisions that are potential substantive change actions.
* The university SACSCOC accreditation liaison is responsible for reviewing curricular decisions brought forth by the associate provost and determining if the action requires substantive change notice to the Commission on Colleges.
* The university SACSCOC accreditation liaison prepares notices and required documentation for submission to the Commission on Colleges with appropriate notices to the provost and chancellor.
* Actions and decisions are communicated to appropriate deans and stakeholders according to the guidelines in *APR 17*.

**Resources**

* Policies, procedures, and information regarding substantive change can be found on the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness [website](http://www.wcu.edu/30518.asp). (http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/chancellors-division/oipe/accreditation/substantive-change.asp)
* The Associate Provost and the University SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison provide guidance for all internal and external reporting activities.

**Training**

* The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness will offer periodic training for deans, department heads and curriculum committee chairs on substantive change policy and other academic program compliance issues related to accreditation.

**Quality Assurance**

* The Office of the Provost maintains and monitors an external reporting tracking system.
* Procedures and information contained in *APR 17* and the *Faculty Handbook* are reviewed and published annually.
* The university registrar will implement changes upon receiving the official SACSCOC letters from the Office of the Provost and will provide the means to track off-campus activity.
* Metrics are kept and reported annually regarding timely reporting of substantive change activity.

**Enforcement**

Responsibility for enforcement of this policy resides with the provost. The deans are responsible for their units adhering to the procedures set forth within *APR 17* and the *Faculty Handbook*, and the provost is responsible for ensuring that they do. The assistant vice chancellor for planning and effectiveness serves as the liaison to the SACSCOC with responsibility to report substantive changes in a timely manner. No substantive change can be implemented until a letter of approval or an acceptance of notification is received from SACSCOC. Prior to receipt of the letter of approval, any distribution of information, including advertising, must include wording that the program is pending SACSCOC approval.

**Review**

The Faculty Senate, Provost’s Council, and the provost have reviewed and approved WCU’s *Substantive Change Compliance Policy*. This policy will be reviewed and updated periodically as appropriate.

1. The *Substantive Change for Accredited Education Institutions of the Commission on Colleges Policy Statement* (SACSCOC, 2013) can be found on the Commission's website: [http://www.SACSCOCcoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp](http://www.sacscoc.org/SubstantiveChange.asp). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)