

# RADFORD UNIVERSITY

<b>Policy Title: Substantive Change Policy</b>	<b>Effective Date: 7/1/2017</b>
<b>Policy Number: AA-PO-1100</b>	<b>Date of Last Review: 9/1/2023</b>
<b>Oversight Department: Office of Institutional Effectiveness &amp; Quality Improvement (SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison)</b>	<b>Next Review Date: 9/1/2026</b>

## 1. PURPOSE

The *Substantive Change Policy* for Radford University (University) establishes, clarifies, and communicates the requirements to be followed for all changes in University programs and activities, both academic and nonacademic, deemed to be “substantive”.

## 2. APPLICABILITY

The *Substantive Change Policy* applies to all University officials who may initiate, review, approve, and allocate resources to any changes in University programs and activities, both academic and nonacademic, which may be considered a substantive change.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

**Accreditation:** Accreditation signifies that the University has a mission appropriate to higher education; has resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission; and maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees it offers. It also indicates whether or not the University is successful in achieving these stated objectives.

**Division Head:** President, Provost, or applicable Vice President.

**SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison:** The University official appointed to work with various leadership teams to promote a culture of evidence and provides oversight on assessment and accreditation matters.

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC):** The regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. SACSCOC accredits the University as an entire institution, including the majority of its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. SACSCOC is responsible for reviewing all substantive changes that occur between an institution’s decennial reviews, determining whether the changes have affected the quality of the total institution, and assuring the public that all aspects of the institution continue to meet defined standards.

**State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV):** The Commonwealth of Virginia's coordinating body for higher education, whose mission is “to advocate and promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia and to lead state-level strategic planning and policy development and implementation based on research and analysis ....”

**Substantive Change:** As defined by SACSCOC, a substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution (See [SubstantiveChange.pdf \(sacscoc.org\)](#)).

#### 4. POLICY

- A. The University is an accredited member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). As a member, the University must follow all SACSCOC policies and procedures. In addition, the University is required to follow policies and procedures established by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) relating to review and/or approval of academic program proposals and changes.
- B. Any new, revised, or discontinued degrees and/or the establishment of distance learning sites must first be approved by the University President/President’s Cabinet and the Board of Visitors, and subsequently must be reported to SCHEV for review and approval prior to implementation.
- C. Likewise, any structural and/or programmatic changes to the University that are deemed to be “substantive change(s)” must first be approved by the University President/President’s Cabinet and the Board of Visitors, and subsequently must be reported to SACSCOC for review and approval prior to implementation.
- D. The University must meet the notification and approval requirements of both agencies, as compliance with one does not constitute compliance with the other. The University must follow the procedures that each organization has developed in order to fulfill these requirements.

#### 5. PROCEDURES

- A. In regards to timing for the procedures related to substantive changes, it should be noted that some requests for approval of substantive changes by **SACSCOC may require a minimum of six months’ notice**. As such, it is extremely important that these procedures be initiated at the earliest stage of conceptualization.
- B. All substantive changes to academic degree programs must be reported by the deans and directors to the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost) at the earliest stage of conceptualization. Individual academic units are not permitted to implement substantive change actions without formal approval from the Provost (see [Radford University Curriculum Review and New Course Proposal Decision Matrix](#)).
- C. All substantive changes to nonacademic programs and activities of the University must be reported to the relevant Division Head at the earliest stage of conceptualization. Individual University units are not permitted to implement substantive change actions without formal approval from the relevant Division Head.

- D. Division Heads must bring forward all potential substantive changes for discussion and approval by the President/President's Cabinet. In accordance with SACSCOC and SCHEV policies, the University will notify or seek approval from SACSCOC and SCHEV of any planned substantive changes as necessary prior to implementation.
- E. In order to ensure timely notification to SACSCOC, Division Heads must keep the Provost and SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison apprised of potential situations that may rise to the level of substantive changes.
- F. Once all internal notifications and reviews are completed and the substantive change is approved internally, the relevant Division Head and the President will notify the Board of Visitors of, and seek approval for, the desired substantive change.
- G. The official delegated by the Provost will review proposed substantive changes to ensure compliance with SCHEV and University regulations, policies, and procedures. Additionally, he/she will assist units in identifying ways to meet the requirements and ensure that deans and directors perform their responsibilities in this regard.
- H. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will oversee the process of preparing appropriate notification, in conjunction with those involved with the substantive change, according to the requirements in the *SACSCOC Policy on Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions* and other related policy and accreditation documents maintained by SACSCOC.
- I. The Provost and the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will ensure that information regarding this policy, associated resources available from SACSCOC, significant changes in SASCOC policy, and answers to frequently asked questions are made available on the Provost's website.

## 6. EXCLUSIONS

None

## 7. APPENDICES

None

## 8. REFERENCES

SACSCOC, [SubstantiveChange.pdf \(sacscoc.org\)](#)

SACSCOC, [Substantive Change - Frequently Asked Questions](#)

SACSCOC, [What is a substantive change and how should it be handled?](#)

SCHEV, [Policies & Guidelines | Virginia State Council Of Higher Education, VA \(schev.edu\)](#)

## 9. INTERPRETATION

The authority to interpret this policy rests with the President of the University and is generally delegated to the Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs.

## 10. APPROVAL AND REVISIONS

The newly developed *Substantive Change Policy* was submitted to and approved by the President's Cabinet at the meeting held on June 28, 2017. President Hemphill signed the new policy on July 5, 2017.

In July 2020, the *Substantive Change Policy* was reviewed by the oversight department and the Office of Policy and Tax Compliance. Only minor editorial changes were made that did not affect the substance or intent of the policy.

Reviewed September 1, 2023, with only minor editorial revisions.

**For questions or guidance on a specific policy, contact the Oversight Department referenced in the policy.**