**Virginia Commonwealth University**

Substantive Change Checklist Form[[1]](#footnote-1)

A substantive change is defined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The SACSCOC [***Substantive Change Policy and Procedures***](https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf) outlines the types of substantive change as well as the required procedures for institutions planning to implement such changes, while the VCU policy, [***Substantive Change for Regional Accreditation***](https://policy.vcu.edu/universitywide-policies/policies/substantive-change-for-regional-accreditation.html)**,** explains the steps taken at the university to ensure timely reporting and compliance.

The University is required to submit notification, and, when required, seek approval by SACSCOC of any substantive change *prior* to implementation of such change. As indicated by SACSCOC:

If an institution is non-compliant with Substantive Change Policy and Procedures…its accreditation may be in jeopardy…Non-compliance subjects the institution to monitoring, sanction, or removal from membership. Failure to secure approval, if required, of a substantive change involving programs or locations that qualify for title IV federal funding may place the institution in jeopardy with the U.S. Department of Education, including reimbursement of funds received related to an unreported substantive change.

To assess whether a degree or certificate program (a new program or change to an existing program) will require SACSCOC notification or approval prior to implementation, schools must complete the following checklist in the early stages of any proposal. Some, though not all, substantive changes require fees to be paid to SACSCOC. Please note that the unit responsible for the substantive change will also be responsible for covering these fees. Fee structures are outlined in the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* and will be reviewed with the proposing units as part of the planning process.

Instructions for Submission: Complete the questions and checklist below by typing responses directly onto this form. Save your submission as a Word Document as PROGRAMTITLE\_VCUSubChangeChecklist.doc and email a copy to Veronica Shuford, Director for Program Development and Innovation (SCHEV) ([schevliaisons@vcu.edu](mailto:schevliaisons@vcu.edu)), for review. You may be contacted for additional information.

Additional resources concerning substantive change may be found on the [SACSCOC website](https://sacscoc.org/). For questions about substantive change or related SACSCOC policies, please contact Rachel Gable, Director for Institutional Effectiveness ([rgable@vcu.edu](mailto:rgable@vcu.edu)).

Name of Proposed Program/Action:

Sponsoring School/Department:

School Contact:

Anticipated Implementation Date:

Date of Submission:

For NEW degree or certificate programs ONLY, complete Section I & II. For a change to an existing program, complete Section II.

**Section I**

A) Program Description (summary paragraph):

B) Target Population:

C) Proposed Enrollment (yes/no):

Does the proposed enrollment meet a need within current enrollment in a school?

Does the proposal assume internal transfers?

Does the proposal assume an enrollment increase beyond those currently approved?

D) Designation Level and Proposed Number of Credit Hours:

**Section II**

| Question | Yes | No | Comments (optional) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Will the program initiate coursework or programs at a more advanced degree level than currently offered at your school? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal expand offerings at the current degree level that represent a significant departure from existing programs (i.e., the proposed program has no closely related counterpart among previously approved programs in the curriculum)? |  |  |  |
| 1. Are more than 25 percent of the courses required for the proposed program new?   If yes, in the comments box provide the fraction of credit hours based on new courses out of the total credit hours required for the new degree, and calculate the percentage (example: if 4 new 3-credit classes are included in the new degree program, which has a 30 credit hour requirement, then the fraction you would include is 12/30 = 40%). |  |  |  |
| 1. Are more than 50 percent of the courses required for the proposed program new?   If yes, in the comments box provide the fraction of credit hours based on new courses out of the total credit hours required for the new degree, and calculate the percentage (example: if 8 new 3-credit classes are included in the new degree program, which has a 30 credit hour requirement, then the fraction you would include is 24/30 = 80%). |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposed program require new faculty?   If yes, in the comments box provide the number of additional full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) faculty you anticipate hiring to establish the program. |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal require new library or other learning resources? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal require new equipment or facilities? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal close an existing program? (If yes, a teach-out plan and SACSCOC approval is required prior to closing) |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal initiate a branch campus? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal initiate a dual degree program with another institution? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal initiate a joint degree program with another institution? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal be offered at an existing off-campus location? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal initiate a program offered at a new off-site location? If yes, answer the following: |  |  |  |
| 1. Will a student be able to earn 50 percent or more of the program credits at the site? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will a student be able to earn 25 to 49 percent of program credits at the site? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will a student be able to earn 24 percent or less of programs at the site? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal initiate a program offered via distance education? If yes, answer the following: |  |  |  |
| 1. Will more than 50 percent of the program be offered via distance education? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will 25 to 49 percent of the program be offered via distance education? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will 24 percent or less of the program be offered via distance education? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal initiate a program or courses through contractual agreement or consortium? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal alter the length of an existing program?   If yes, in the comments box provide the fraction of credit hours added or removed out of the original total credit hours required for the existing degree, and calculate the percentage (example: if 3 3-credit classes are removed from an existing 39-credit program, then the fraction you would include is 9/39=23%). |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal add a completion pathway to an existing program that recognizes and accommodates a student’s prior knowledge or competency? |  |  |  |
| 1. Will the proposal initiate a competency based education program?   If yes, in the comments box indicate whether the program will be administered through direct assessment. |  |  |  |

Academic Affairs Comments:

1. This form is adapted from the University of Virginia “Substantive Change Checklist Form” and the University of Tennessee Knoxville “Substantive Change Checklist.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)