



Substantive Change Policy

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I. Policy Statement

Dalton State College (DSC) is responsible for complying with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges ([SACSCOC](#)) policy statement, [Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#), as a condition of continued regional accreditation and reaffirmation. SACSCOC defines substantive change as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution” (SACSCOC, 2020, p. 1).

II. Background

Per its policy statement on substantive change, SACSCOC requires DSC “to have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion” (p. 1). This requirement also complies with SACSCOC Standard 14.2 (Substantive Change) of *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, 2018*. This institutional policy outlines the types of substantive changes, appropriate actions for applying for the SACSCOC approval changes, and the roles and responsibilities of the College in applying this policy.

III. Audience and Impact

Substantive change decisions and actions at DSC directly impact students, faculty, and staff because the College’s accreditation and reaffirmation status are associated with the institution’s compliance with this policy. Given that SACSCOC’s substantive change policies reflect regulations of the United States Department of Education, failure to adhere to and comply with such policies can have significant repercussions including sanctions from SACSCOC and loss of Title IV funding eligibility.

IV. Exclusions or Exceptions

There are no exclusions or exceptions to this policy.

While not all substantive changes to be submitted by an individual program to any of that program's accrediting or regulatory agencies require submission to SACSCOC, all program-level substantive changes remain subject to this policy until and unless the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison has specifically determined that a particular change does not require submission to SACSCOC.

While many changes must go through various approval processes on campus or within the University System of Georgia, such as approval by the DSC Academic Programs Committee for changes to programs, those processes do not replace any requirements of this policy. Proposals approved by such processes may have their implementation delayed if the requirements of this policy are not satisfied, so that proper SACSCOC approval may be obtained before implementation as required by SACSCOC policy.

It is critically important to remember that terms and definitions used by DSC and/or the University System of Georgia (USG) may be different or even disagree with those used by SACSCOC, but the reporting must be performed based on SACSCOC terms and definitions. Historically, one significant example is related to closure of a program. SACSCOC defines closure of a program as closing it to new students whereas DSC and the USG refer to that step as a deactivation; the difference in terminology does not absolve DSC of its reporting burden under the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy.

V. Reporting Substantive Changes

The submission deadlines and required information for reporting substantive changes vary depending on the extent and type of change. All changes to degree programs, offerings at other sites, methods of delivery, or the institution must be reported to Dalton State's SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison with sufficient notice before planned implementation to fully complete the SACSCOC submission and approval process, including the determination of reporting requirements, completion of required forms and documentation, and timely submission to SACSCOC by the appropriate deadline. Any questions about reporting should be directed to the Dalton State College SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison.

The full list of substantive changes, along with corresponding descriptions and submission requirements, can be found in the *SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* document. Many types of substantive change are listed in Appendix A.

VI. Institutional Action and Responsibilities

Any significant course of action undertaken at the institution may constitute a substantive change, and this identification should be possible in the planning phases. It is important to recognize that substantive change can occur at the program, departmental, or institutional level. Many types of substantive change are listed in Appendix A. For a full list of the different types of substantive changes, the specific procedures to be used for each type of change, their respective approval/notification requirements and their reporting timelines, see the *SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* document.

A key component of the SACSCOC policy is that changes need to be adequately planned and then submitted early enough that they can be approved before implementation. SACSCOC approval is required before implementation, except in the cases of many changes that are considered "Notification only" by SACSCOC. Depending on the level of approval required and the planned

implementation date, the submission deadline can be as much as a year prior to the planned implementation; generally speaking, it is safest to assume that January 1 is the submission deadline for a change to be implemented during the following fall semester and that July 1 is the submission deadline for a change to be implemented during the following spring semester.

The college's SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison is responsible for identifying the appropriate submission type and corresponding deadline and therefore needs to be involved in any related planning or discussion as early as possible, generally not later than September 1 for a change to be implemented in the next fall semester and not later than February 1 for a change to be implemented in the next spring semester. While some changes only requiring notification to SACSCOC and a select few other changes such as program closures do not require as much lead time, the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison must make the appropriate determination. Please note that implementation dates may need to be delayed to adequately accommodate SACSCOC reporting and approval requirements, particularly if the accreditation liaison is brought into the process too late or there are substantial modifications made to the planned change.

Many types of substantive change require committee visits and/or review fees, which must be funded by DSC. In such cases, it is also critical to include the Office of Fiscal Affairs in the planning and submission process at least three months prior to the SACSCOC submission deadline. Failure to meet this deadline may result in delays to submission and implementation, at the discretion of the Office of Fiscal Affairs.

For any submission that requires SACSCOC Board of Trustees or Executive Council approval, a final draft of the submission needs to be provided to Dalton State's SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison and Executive Cabinet for final review at least one month prior to the submission deadline so that minor final revisions and clarifications can be made and the submission finalized before the deadline. If the institutional accreditation liaison and/or the Executive Cabinet determine that the draft proposal is sufficiently inadequate, they reserve the right to delay submission and implementation until the proposal can be improved for the next submission deadline, which would be approximately six months later.

Summary of Timeline

- Begin planning the change.
- As early as possible, incorporate the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison into planning efforts to determine whether the change constitutes a substantive change. If it is, then the liaison will determine the appropriate submission type, requirements, and corresponding SACSCOC deadline based on the information available at this time.
- The remaining timeline is based on the institutional accreditation liaison's determination of the submission type required. If the submission type changes during the process, the timeline for the new submission type will apply.
 - If the change is determined to not require any substantive change submission to SACSCOC:
 - Planning should continue as normal. The institutional accreditation liaison must be notified of any modifications to the plan in case those modifications would result in the need for a substantive change submission.
 - If the change is determined to require notification only:
 - Planning should continue as normal so that notification can be submitted in a timely manner. The institutional accreditation liaison will identify an appropriate

- deadline for the submission, which should be at least one month before the proposed implementation date.
 - Throughout the process, the institutional accreditation liaison must be notified of any modifications to the plan in case those modifications would result in the need for a different submission type.
 - The notification will be subject to final review by Dalton State's institutional accreditation liaison and Executive Cabinet for a period of no less than two weeks before final submission to SACSCOC.
- If the change is determined to require approval by the SACSCOC Executive Council:
 - Planning should continue as normal and the institutional accreditation liaison will provide information about the requirements for the prospectus. The submission deadlines, per the SACSCOC policy in place at the time of writing, are January 1 for implementation July 1 through December 31 and July 1 for implementation January 1 through June 30.
 - Throughout the process, the institutional accreditation liaison must be notified of any modifications to the plan in case those modifications would result in the need for a different submission type.
 - If the institutional accreditation liaison determines that the submission has the potential to incur review fees and/or require a site visit, Fiscal Affairs will need to be advised at least three months before the submission deadline.
 - At least one month before the submission deadline, the final draft must be submitted to Dalton State's institutional accreditation liaison and Executive Cabinet for final review.
- If the change is determined to require approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees
 - Planning should continue as normal and the institutional accreditation liaison will provide information about the requirements for the prospectus. The submission deadlines, per the SACSCOC policy in place at the time of writing, are March 15 for implementation July 1 through December 31 and September 1 for implementation January 1 through June 30.
 - Throughout the process, the institutional accreditation liaison must be notified of any modifications to the plan in case those modifications would result in the need for a different submission type.
 - If the institutional accreditation liaison determines that the submission has the potential to incur review fees and/or require a site visit, Fiscal Affairs will need to be advised at least three months before the submission deadline.
 - At least one month before the submission deadline, the final draft must be submitted to Dalton State's institutional accreditation liaison and Executive Cabinet for final review.

Responsibilities

The President's Executive Cabinet and other academic officers are primarily responsible for being mindful of the substantive change policy in order to inform the College's institutional accreditation liaison at the earliest point in the development of a proposal or plan that may constitute a substantive change for DSC. Senior administrative and academic officers will provide the institutional

accreditation liaison with any data or information necessary to comply with the SACSCOC policy as needed. The institutional accreditation liaison is also responsible for:

- Maintaining and updating the College's policy on substantive change in keeping with SACSCOC policy changes as needed;
- Maintaining a file of all accreditation materials related to substantive change;
- Keeping senior administrative and academic officers up to date on the substantive change policy;
- Publishing on the [Institutional Research website](#) information on the College's actions, procedures, and documents regarding substantive change;
- Collaborating with college officials, including but not limited to the president, vice presidents, and deans, to determine whether a proposed change is substantive and what action may be required by the institution when a change is substantive;
- Notifying SACSCOC in advance of substantive changes and program developments in accord with the substantive change policies of the Commission;
- Submitting the appropriate notice, prospectus, or application with SACSCOC; and
- Coordinating with SACSCOC and College officials on any required follow-up action.

VII. Assistance with Substantive Change Policy

Dalton State College's SACSCOC institutional accreditation liaison will provide assistance and all necessary and required information to academic schools/departments involved in the substantive change to ensure compliance. This will include providing the most current forms and instructions required for the substantive change. The institutional accreditation liaison will communicate with SACSCOC staff if there are any questions about how policies apply.

VIII. Unreported Substantive Changes

Should any entity on campus become aware of an implemented change that should have been reported as a substantive change, it needs to be reported to the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison immediately so that the unreported change can be submitted to SACSCOC as quickly as possible. Such changes reflect a lack of compliance with this policy, SACSCOC policy, and potentially United States Department of Education policy.

Whenever an unreported substantive change is discovered, the SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison will also attempt to identify the cause(s) for the error and will seek out methods to prevent similar errors in the future.

IX. Non-Compliance

If Dalton State fails to comply with the *Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions Policy Statement*, the institution could be subject to special review and lose its federal financial aid (Title IV) funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse money received by the institution for programs related to an unreported substantive change. In addition, SACSCOC may impose a sanction on the institution or remove it from the Commission's membership.

X. SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison

At the time of the most recent update to this policy, Dalton State College's SACSCOC Institutional Accreditation Liaison is Dr. Nicholas Gewecke, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment. Dr. Gewecke's contact information is listed at the beginning of this document.

XI. Policy Review

The Office of Institutional Research will be responsible for reviewing DSC's *Substantive Change Policy* as part of its annual assessment and reporting processes or more often as may be needed.

XII. SACSCOC Policies and Regulations

The following SACSCOC documents and website are necessary for keeping up to date all information requirements, announcements, and documentation related to substantive change:

- a. [SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#), see Standard 14.2.
- b. [SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures](#).
- c. [Documentation Templates in Preparation for a Substantive Change Committee Visit to an Institution](#).
- d. SACSCOC Substantive Change site (<https://sacscoc.org/accrediting-standards/substantive-changes/>)

Appendices

A. Examples of Substantive Change

The following are examples of substantive changes, by submission type. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list of potential substantive changes that DSC could make nor does it fully describe each of the listed changes. For the fully detailed list of substantive changes, encompassing a wide array of potential changes to programs, sites, and the institution, please refer to the SACSCOC *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* document. Requirements frequently escalate to a higher level if an institution is placed on Substantive Change Restriction.

Substantive Changes requiring SACSCOC Board Approval

- Off-campus instructional site (including dual enrollment) at which 50% or more of a program's instruction is delivered if extensive review is required

Substantive Changes requiring SACSCOC Executive Council Approval

- Cooperative Academic Arrangements with non-Title IV Entities to deliver 25%-50% of a program
- New program with 50% or more new content or expands an existing program to a different degree level
- Program closure (Note: SACSCOC defines this as the program being closed to admission or entry, not the cessation of instruction within the program)
- Off-campus instructional site (including dual enrollment) at which 50% or more of a program's instruction is delivered if only limited review is required

Substantive Changes requiring Notification

- Cooperative Academic Arrangements with Title IV Entities to deliver 50% or more of a program or the institution cannot deliver the program without the arrangement
- Cooperative Academic Arrangements with non-Title IV Entities to deliver less than 25% of a program
- Additional Methods of Delivery for a Degree Program (note: the three methods of delivery recognized by SACSCOC are competency-based education, distance education, and face-to-face instruction) when 50% or more of a program can be earned through the method when it could not be previously
- New program with 25%-49% new content
- Program designed for Prior Learning (a program requiring students to possess prior learning as a condition of admission)
- Program re-open (within five years of the date the program was closed to admission; after a longer period, it is considered a new program)
- Off-campus instructional site (including dual enrollment) at which 25%-49% of a program's instruction is delivered
- Off-campus instructional site name or address change (not relocation)
- Off-campus instructional site relocation

DSC Documentation

Dalton State Substantive Changes Submitted to SACSCOC with Associated Notices and Responses

Dalton State College went through a major substantive change in 1998 when [SACSCOC approved a change of mission from a Level I institution to a Level II institution](#), enabling the College to begin offering baccalaureate-degree programs, and eventually becoming a 4-Year College institution. The following provides a complete accounting of Dalton State's submitted substantive changes to SACSCOC and associated notices and responses. They also provide documentation to show Dalton State's compliance with [SACSCOC Policy](#) and [Standard \(14.2\)](#) on Substantive Change, or the relevant policies and standards in place at the time of the respective changes.

DSC Substantive Change Prospectuses and Updates

1. [Substantive Change Prospectus \(Off-site Facility at Ellijay, Gilmer County, Georgia\), 2010](#)
2. [Substantive Change Prospectus \(Off-site Facility at Ellijay, Gilmer County, Georgia\) – Response to Additional Information Requested by SACSCOC, 2010](#)
3. [Substantive Change Prospectus \(WebBAS Online Degree Initiative\), 2004](#)
4. [Substantive Change Prospectus Application Update \(Approved membership at Level II\), 2000](#)
5. [Substantive Change Application \(Change of Mission – Level I to Level II\), 1998](#)
6. [Addendum to Substantive Change Prospectus \(Consolidation of Health Occupations\), 1996](#)
7. [Substantive Change Prospectus \(Consolidation of Health Occupations\), 1995](#)

Program Initiatives

1. [Dalton State application to offer BAS Online Degree Program, 2004](#)

DSC Notifications and Correspondence

1. [Notification of 25%-49% Off-Campus Site at Dalton High School, 2022](#)
2. [Notification of 25%-49% Off-Campus Site at Northwest \(Whitfield\) High School, 2022](#)
3. [Notification of 2021 Unreported Addition of Method of Delivery \(Distance\) for ASN Program, 2022](#)
4. [Notification of 2021 Unreported Closure of AAS Integrated Tech Studies, 2022](#)
5. [Notification of 2020 Unreported Re-open of AAS Integrated Tech Studies, 2022](#)
6. [Notification of 2020 Unreported Closure of BAS Scientific Technology, 2022](#)
7. [Notification of 2020 Unreported Closure of AA Music, 2022](#)
8. [Notification of 2019 Unreported Closure of AAS Integrated Tech Studies, 2022](#)
9. [Notification to rename Off-campus site, the Gilmer Campus, as the Mountain Campus, 2021](#)
10. [Notification of Temporary Emergency Relocation of Instruction, 2020](#)
11. [Notification to rename off-campus site, the Gilmer Center, as the Dalton State College Gilmer Campus, 2017](#)
12. [Notification about entering into an Agreement with the Georgia Film Academy, 2017](#)
13. [Notification of Intent to offer Coursework through the USG eMajor Consortium, 2013](#)
14. [Notification to add Intercollegiate Athletics to campus programming, 2012](#)
15. [Notification to close Department of Continuing Education, 2011](#)
16. [Notification to open an Off-site Facility at Ellijay, Gilmer County, 2009](#)

SACSCOC Responses and Requests

1. [Acknowledgement of Gilmer Campus name change to Mountain Campus, 2021](#)
2. [Acknowledgement of Gilmer Center Name Change, 2018](#)
3. [Response to Accepting Georgia Film Academy Credits at DSC, 2018](#)

4. [Notification Approving eMajor BS Criminal Justice, 2015](#)
5. [Acknowledgement of Receipt of Letter of Intent to offer Coursework through USG eMajor Consortium, 2013](#)
6. [Response to Closing of Department of Continuing Education, 2011](#)
7. [Approval of Gilmer County Center \(Campus\), 2011](#)
8. [Response to DSC Notification regarding becoming an Affiliate Institution of the USG eCore Program, 2011](#)
9. [Request for Additional Information Regarding Gilmer Center Substantive Change Prospectus, 2010](#)
10. [Approval for WebBAS Online Degree Program, 2004](#)
11. [Approval of DSC Membership at Level II, 1999](#)
12. [Approval to Consolidate Health Occupations, 1996](#)