



Substantive Change Policy

Substantive changes in candidate or accredited institutions are to be reported to the Commission and approved in advance of implementation. A substantive change is one that may significantly affect the institution's quality, objectives, scope, or control, or that triggers conditions established under federal law. The Commission regards the following as examples of substantive change:

- Any significant change in the established mission or objectives of the institution.
- Any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution.
- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, in either content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when WASC last evaluated the institution.
- The initiation of degree programs in which 50% or more of the program is offered through distance education or is electronically mediated, unless the institution has General approval for distance education programs.
- The initiation of any degree program whose requirements for graduation are based on the mastery of competencies rather than the accrual of credit hours.
- The addition of courses or programs, including joint or dual degrees, at a degree or credential level for which the institution does not have General approval.
- 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 that is 25 miles or more from the main campus and at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.
- The establishment of a new degree program that will be delivered under contract with an institution or organization not certified to participate in Title IV, HEA programs.
- The acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution.
- The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.

Each institution is responsible for developing internal procedures to assure that it is in compliance with the Commission's substantive change policies and procedures, and that new sites or programs are not initiated without obtaining the necessary approvals. Questions about whether a new program or site constitutes a substantive change should be addressed to WASC staff. Eligibility for federal financial aid is permitted for such off-campus and/or distance education programs or sites only if they are recognized and approved by the Commission through this process. If the Commission determines that a site or program has been initiated without such approval, the institution will be required to cease enrollments at that site, or for that program, until the necessary substantive change approval(s) have been obtained. If noncompliance occurs more than once, the matter shall immediately be referred to the Commission for consideration of a sanction for the entire institution for violation of its responsibilities under the Institutional Integrity portions of Standard 1.

A comprehensive explanation of the Commission's policies and procedures regarding Substantive Change may be found in the *Substantive Change Manual*, which is available on the WASC website. All related forms are also available on the website.

Related Policies

Degree Level Approval

Distance Education and Technology-Mediated Instruction

Contracts with Unaccredited Organizations

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