

Reporting and Approval of Substantive Changes

Standard Administrative Procedure

7.1100.01

Board Policy Reference: [GK \(LEGAL\), Relations with Educational Accreditation Agencies](#), [GK \(LOCAL\), Relations with Educational Accreditation Agencies](#)

Approved (05-07-2025)

Revised (05-07-2025)

Next Scheduled Review (05-07-2030)



Purpose Statement

To ensure that Laredo College remains in compliance with the substantive change requirements of applicable oversight and accrediting bodies, including programmatic accreditors, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the institution's recognized accrediting agency, this procedure outlines the institutional processes for identifying, reviewing, reporting, and obtaining approval for substantive changes prior to implementation.

Definitions

Substantive Change - a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Changes to the institution's mission or objectives
- Changes in legal status, ownership, or control
- New programs or credentials representing a significant departure from what was previously approved or evaluated
- New degree levels offered
- Distance education or method of delivery changes
- New or relocated instructional sites offering 25% or more of a program
- Closures of programs, campuses, or sites
- Joint or dual degree programs
- Contractual agreements involving third-party entities delivering 25% or more of a program

Teach-Out Plan - a written plan developed by the institution to ensure students can complete their program of study when a program, instructional site, or institution is closed. The plan must provide for equitable treatment of students and comply with recognized accrediting agency policy requirements.

Notification - a formal written statement submitted to a recognized accrediting agency prior to implementation of certain changes not requiring prior approval.

Prospectus - a detailed report describing the proposed substantive change, including planning, curriculum, resources, faculty, support services, and financial projections, submitted to the institution's recognized accrediting agency when prior approval is required.

Approval - written authorization from SACSCOC, based on a prospectus submission, required before implementing designated changes.

Teach-Out Agreement - a formal agreement between institutions that ensures students affected by a program or institutional closure can complete their studies at another institution. The agreement must be equitable, legally binding, and approved by a recognized accrediting agency in advance of implementation.

Procedure

1. Identification and Early Notification

- 1.1. Any instructional or administrative unit considering a change potentially subject to recognized accrediting agency substantive change policy must work with the Curriculum Systems Director prior to engaging in the formal curriculum process.
- 1.2. The Curriculum Systems Director, in coordination with the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, will evaluate whether the proposed change meets the recognized accrediting agency definition of a substantive change and whether notification or approval is required.

2. Internal Review and Documentation

- 2.1. The initiating department is responsible for preparing internal documentation, including curriculum packet, budget impact, rationale, and teach-out plans. Required documentation is reviewed and signed by the respective Dean, the Associate Provost/Strategic and Collaborative Partnerships, and Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs.

3. Submission of Documentation

- 3.1. The Accreditation Liaison submits the required documentation to the recognized accrediting agency:
 - 3.1.1. Notification letters must be submitted at least 3 months prior to implementation.
 - 3.1.2. Prospectuses must be submitted 6–12 months prior to implementation (depending on change type).
- 3.2. Implementation may not begin until written acknowledgment or approval is received from a recognized accrediting agency.

4. Institutional Implementation and Notification

- 4.1. Upon receipt of recognized accrediting agency correspondence, the Accreditation Liaison notifies the campus community. A record of the change and supporting documentation is archived by the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness.

Procedures For Common Substantive Changes

Change Type	Required Action	Responsible Parties
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New program or credential (significant departure)	Prospectus	Academic Dept + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
New program (not a significant departure)	Notification	Academic Dept + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Offering 25–49% of a program at a new location	Notification	Dept Chair + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Offering ≥50% of a program at a new location	Prospectus	Dept Chair + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
The first program offered via distance education	Prospectus	Instructional Tech + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Subsequent programs via distance (if already approved)	Notification	Instructional Tech + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Program closure	Prospectus + teach-out plan	Dean + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Site closure or relocation	Notification + teach-out if needed	Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Joint/dual academic awards	Notification or prospectus depending on partnership	Academic Dept + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Contractual arrangements ≥25% (non-Title IV entity)	Prospectus	Academic or Admin Dept + Legal + Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

Deadlines for Submission

Implementation in Fall

Action	Date
Submit to the Laredo College Board Curriculum Committee for Approval	September 1st
Submit to the Laredo College Board of Trustees for Approval	September 1st
Submit to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for approval	October 1st
Submit to Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness	October 1st
Submit Prospectus to recognized accrediting agency	December 15th

Implementation in Spring

Action	Date
Submit to the Laredo College Board Curriculum Committee for Approval	February 1 st
Submit to the Laredo College Board of Trustees for Approval	March 1 st
Submit to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for approval	April 1 st
Submit to Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness	April 1 st
Submit Prospectus to the recognized accrediting agency	June 15 th

Important Note:

Substantive change submissions must meet internal and external deadlines. If required documentation is not submitted by the stated internal deadline, the request will be deferred to the next submission cycle. Implementation of the change may not proceed until formal approval is received from the applicable accreditor.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) - Career and Technical Education Guidelines

GK - Relations with Educational Accreditation Agencies – GK(LEGAL)

GK - Relations with Educational Accreditation Agencies – GK(LOCAL)

Appendix

Appendix A – Significant Departure Rubric

Appendix B – Closure of Program/Credential Template

Contacts

Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Memorial Hall 211
956-764-5944

Compliance and Risk Management (Accreditation Liaison)
Elpha Lee West Building 129
956-764-5950

APPENDIX A: SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE DETERMINATION RUBRIC

Purpose

This rubric is designed to assist Laredo College in determining whether a proposed new program, certificate, or substantial revision constitutes a significant departure from previously approved offerings. Identifying significant departures ensures compliance with SACSCOC Substantive Change policy and internal quality assurance procedures.

Definition

A significant departure is defined as a program that is not closely related to previously approved programs at the institution or site or for the proposed mode of delivery. A proposed program is more likely to constitute a significant departure if it introduces new disciplinary content, requires substantial institutional resources, or necessitates a new curricular foundation.

Significant Departure Determination Rubric

Criterion	Guiding Questions	Score	Scoring Guidance
Curricular Alignment	Does the proposed program share substantial content or learning outcomes with existing programs?	0 – Closely related 1 – Moderately related 2 – Substantially different	0 = Over 75% overlap 1 = 40–75% overlap 2 = Less than 40% overlap
Method of Delivery	Is the delivery method new or substantially different from current offerings?	0 – Same 1 – Modified 2 – Entirely new modality	Examples: online, hybrid, direct assessment
Equipment/Facility Needs	Will new equipment or facilities be required to deliver the program?	0 – No new needs 1 – Moderate upgrades 2 – Major investment	Includes labs, simulations, or specialized classrooms
Financial Resources	Are significant new institutional investments required?	0 – Minimal cost 1 – Moderate cost 2 – High cost requiring new budget allocation	Consider startup, personnel, and operational costs
Curriculum Development	Will the program introduce new courses using course rubrics (prefixes) not currently in the program?	0 – No new rubrics 1 – 1–2 new rubrics 2 – 3+ new rubrics or significant redesign	Rubric Note: A new rubric signifies a new discipline or field (e.g., COSC, FINC)
Faculty Requirements	Will new faculty with different credentials or expertise be required?	0 – Existing faculty 1 – Retraining/reassignment 2 – New faculty hires	Consider subject matter qualifications and full-time needs
Library and Learning Resources	Are additional library or academic resources required?	0 – Existing resources sufficient 1 – Minor additions 2 – Substantial new resources	Includes databases, journals, instructional tools

Interpretation of Scores

Total Score	Determination	Required Action
0–4	Not a Significant Departure	No SACSCOC reporting required
5–8	Possibly a Significant Departure	Refer to Accreditation Liaison
9–14	Significant Departure	Substantive Change notification or prospectus required

Usage Guidance

This rubric must be completed by the initiating department in consultation with the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness. The Accreditation Liaison will use this tool as part of the internal review process to determine whether the proposed change require notification or prior approval.

A copy of the completed rubric should be included in the program proposal packet submitted through the internal curriculum approval process and archived in the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness documentation system.

Appendix B - Closure of Program/Credential

INSTITUTIONAL CONTACT

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Vice President of Compliance and Risk Management
SACSCOC Liaison
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I. SUMMARY

Provide a concise summary of the reason for the program closure or award deactivation, including the effective closure date. Clearly state that this teach-out plan complies with SACSCOC Substantive Change policies and is designed to ensure continuity and support for students, faculty, and community stakeholders.

II. TEACH-OUT PLAN DETAILS

1. Closure Date

- Program Name:
- Credential(s):
- CIP Code:
- Location(s):
- Division/Department:
- Last Date of Admission (MM/DD/YYYY)?
- Proposed Closure Date:

2. Communication Plan

- Currently Enrolled Students – describe notification methods and advising strategy.
- Students with Lapsed Enrollment – outline outreach efforts and timelines.
- Prospective Students – explain how recruitment and marketing materials were updated.
- Faculty and Staff – describe notification, HR support, and transition planning.
- Community and Industry Partners – describe communication with advisory boards or partners.

3. Support for Students

- Describe academic advising, transition options, financial aid continuity, tutoring, and other services provided to students.

4. Additional Costs to Students

- Indicate whether students will incur additional expenses and describe efforts to minimize burden.

5. Teach-Out Agreements (if applicable)

- Include partner institution(s), type of agreement, and student transition steps.
- If not applicable, state: 'Laredo College is not partnering with another institution for this teach-out plan.'

6. Faculty and Staff Redeployment

- Describe how affected employees will be supported, reassigned, or notified of separation.

7. Specialized Accreditation (if applicable)

- State current status with programmatic accreditor and any teach-out coordination efforts.

8. Internal Stakeholder Notification

- List internal departments notified.

III. CONCLUSION

Reaffirm Laredo College's commitment to transparency, student success, and institutional integrity. Confirm that all teach-out plan components have been reviewed and approved internally, and that the plan will be submitted to the recognized accrediting agency for review and approval prior to implementation.