



Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
 Commission on Colleges
 1866 Southern Lane
 Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE FOR ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

- Policy Statement -

Definition: Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. Under federal regulations, substantive change includes

- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution
- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
- The addition of courses or programs at a degree or credential level above that which is included in the institution’s current accreditation or reaffirmation.
- 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 geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.
- The establishment of a branch campus

Notification constitutes a letter from the institution’s chief executive officer or his/her designated representative to the President of the Commission summarizing the proposed change, providing the intended implementation date, and listing the complete physical address, if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site or branch campus. The policy and procedures for reporting and review of institutional substantive change are outlined below.

The Policy	2
Commission Responsibilities.....	2
Institutional Responsibilities	2
Procedures for Reporting Substantive Changes: An Overview	2
Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change	2
Required Committee Visits.....	5
Policy Statements	6
Fees and Expenses.....	7
Current Standards and Policies Addressing Unreported Substantive Change	8
Procedure One: The Review of Substantive Changes	
Requiring <i>Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation</i>	10
Procedure Two: The Review of Substantive Changes	
Requiring <i>Only Notification Prior to Implementation</i>	14
Procedure Three: The Review and Approval of Consolidations/Mergers.....	16
Exhibits	
Exhibit A: The Content of the Prospectus.....	A1
Exhibit B: Application for Member Institutions Seeking Accreditation	
at a More Advanced Degree Level	B1

The Policy

Commission Responsibilities

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges accredits an entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located or however they are delivered. It is responsible for reviewing all substantive changes that occur between an institution's decennial reviews to determine whether or not the change has affected the quality of the total institution and to assure the public that all aspects of the institution continue to meet defined standards.

The Commission on Colleges is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an agency whose accreditation enables its member institutions to seek eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. To maintain its recognition with the U.S. Department of Education, the Commission on Colleges has incorporated federal requirements into its substantive change policy and procedures. Some of those requirements expect an institution to seek approval prior to the initiation of a substantive change so that the change can be included in the institution's scope of accreditation.

Institutional Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of an institution to follow the substantive change procedures of the Commission and inform the Commission of such changes in accord with those procedures. If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact Commission staff for consultation. The Commission on Colleges accredits institutions not systems. While a system may provide the Commission with important information regarding changes planned or underway at its institutions, it is expected that each institution will follow the reporting requirements of the substantive change policy.

Procedures for Reporting: An Overview

There are three procedures for addressing the different types of substantive changes:

1. Procedure One for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring *Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation*
2. Procedure Two for the Review of Substantive Changes Requiring *Only Notification Prior to Implementation*
3. Procedure Three for the Review and Approval of *Consolidations/Mergers*

The initiation or revision of programs not offered for academic credit and that are not eligible for federal financial aid does not require reporting; however, such programs are subject to review at the time of reaffirmation.

Reporting the Various Types of Substantive Change

The different types of substantive change, the specific procedure to be used for each, their respective approval/notification requirements, and their reporting time lines are included in the table that follows. Please refer to the appropriate procedure for details regarding reporting.

Types of Change	Procedure	Prior Notification Required	Time Frame for Contacting COC	Prior Approval Required	Documentation
Initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced level than currently approved	1	Yes	12 months	Yes	Application for Level Change Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Expanding at current degree level (<i>significant departure from current programs</i>) ¹	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a branch campus (see definition of "branch campus" on p. 5 of this document)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating joint degrees with another institution (see Commission policy "Collaborative Academic Arrangements: Policy and Procedures)	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating a certificate program... (typically for workforce development)					
...using existing approved courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	None
...at a new off-campus site (previously approved program)	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
...that is a significant departure from previously approved programs ¹	1	Yes	Approval required prior to implementation	Yes	Modified prospectus
Initiating off-campus sites (including Early College High School programs offered at the high school) ...					
...Student can obtain 50 percent or more credits toward program	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
...Student can obtain 25-49 percent of credit	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Student can obtain 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	none
Expanding program offerings at previously approved off-campus sites					
...Adding programs that are significantly different from current programs	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Adding programs that are NOT significantly different from current programs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Altering significantly the educational mission of the institution ²	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating distance learning...					
...Offering 50 percent or more of a program (Once approved, institutions may add programs that are significant departures from the originally approved programs by submitting notification in advance) ¹	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
...Offering 25-49 percent	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
...Offering 24 percent or less	NA	NA	NA	NA	None
Initiating programs/courses offered through contractual agreement or consortium	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification and copy of signed agreement
Initiating a merger/consolidation with another institution	3	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus Due dates: April 15 or October 1
Relocating a main or branch campus	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Relocating an off-campus instructional site	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Letter of notification
Changing governance, ownership, control, or legal status of an institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Changing from clock hours to credit hours	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Altering significantly the length of a program ³	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Initiating degree completion programs	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Prospectus
Closing an institution or program: (see Commission policy "Closing a Program or Institution")					
...closing a program with internal teach-out protocol	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	No	Description of plan
... closing a program with a teach-out agreement with another institution	1	Yes	6 months	Yes	Copy of teach out agreement
...closing an institution	2	Yes	Prior to implementation	no	Description of plan

¹ a significant departure in program is one in which the proposed new program has no closely related counterpart among the previously approved programs in the curriculum. To determine if a new program is a "significant departure", it is helpful to ask if the new program requires

- Numbers of new faculty?
- Many new courses?
- New library or other learning resources?
- New equipment or facilities?
- A new resource base?

² significant changes in mission are those that lead to a fundamental shift in the nature of the institution, such as an institution that had offered only professional programs deciding to add general education offerings, or a technical college transforming itself into a comprehensive community college.

³ significant changes in program length are those with noticeable impact on the program's completion time (e.g., increasing a baccalaureate degree from 124 hours to 150 hours).

Required Committee Visits

The following five types of substantive changes require on-site committee reviews within six months of implementation:

1. The initiation of an additional off-campus site offering an educational program at which a student can earn at least 50 percent of the credits toward a program, if any of the following applies: (a) the institution has a total of three or fewer additional locations, or (b) the institution has not demonstrated, to the Commission's satisfaction, that it has a proven record of effective educational oversight of additional locations, or (c) the institution has been placed on Commission sanction or is subject to some limitation on its accreditation.

The Commission will conduct visits to the first three off-campus locations of this kind initiated by an institution.

When an institution initiates its fourth off-campus site/location, the Commission may, at its discretion, choose not to conduct visits to any of these additional sites at the times of their initiation if the institution has previously demonstrated a record of effective oversight of its off-campus educational locations and has not been placed on sanction. The Commission, however, will require visits to a representative sample of sites at the fifth-year interval between scheduled reaffirmations if (1) the additional sites have been initiated since the last scheduled reaffirmation and (2) the sites have not been visited.

At any time, the Commission may choose to authorize visits to new sites developed between the fifth-year review and the next scheduled reaffirmation of accreditation.

At the time of reaffirmation, the Commission will conduct a thorough review of a representative sample of additional sites where a student can obtain 50 percent or more of course work toward an educational program. The extent of the review will depend, in part, on whether there has been a recent review of the sites.

2. The initiation of a branch campus. A branch campus is defined as a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is
 - (1) permanent in nature
 - (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential
 - (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization **and**
 - (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority

If it is determined that an additional site has sufficient autonomy, the institution may be directed to seek separate accreditation for the unit (see Commission policy "Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution").

3. The initiation of a change in governance/ownership with a change in control.
4. The initiation of mergers/consolidations.
5. The initiation of coursework, credit certificates, or degree programs at a more advanced level than currently approved by the Commission. (Depending on the existing related programs offered by an institution, a committee visit may not be required for institutions moving from Level III to IV or from Level V to VI. See level classifications on page 10 of this document.)

The President of the Commission also is authorized to appoint a Substantive Change Committee to review an institution for any change requiring a more in-depth evaluation beyond the prospectus submitted by the institution. The report of the Substantive Change Committee will be used by the Commission to determine the ongoing accreditation of an institution.

Policy Statements Regarding Substantive Change

1. The *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* applies to all programs and services of COC-accredited institutions wherever they are located or however they are delivered. Failure to comply with the *Principles* or with procedures referred to in this policy could result in the institution being placed on sanction or being removed from membership.
2. Denial of approval of substantive change is not appealable. An institution that fails to gain approval of the substantive change may resubmit a revised prospectus or application following the guidelines and time frames described in Procedures One and Two.
3. An accredited institution in the appeals process or in litigation with SACS COC is not eligible for consideration of substantive change.
4. A COC-accredited institution whose proposed consolidation/merger is not approved by the Commission shall maintain its separately accredited status with the Commission. However, if the institution continues with the change after denial of approval of the consolidation/merger, it may be placed on sanction or removed from membership.
5. The Commission's substantive change policy applies only to accredited institutions. Applicant and candidate institutions may not initiate substantive changes.
6. Procedures One and Two may not address all substantive changes that the Commission will review in the interim between an institution's reaffirmation cycles. Therefore, the Commission reserves the right to classify significant changes other than those described above as substantive in nature and to follow up accordingly. The follow-up procedure may include a committee visit.
7. An institution may withdraw its prospectus/application or may discontinue substantive change at any time during the review process by submitting a formal letter of withdrawal to the President of the Commission.
8. Once an institution submits its prospectus or application and the document is reviewed by either the Committee on Compliance and Reports or by Commission staff, any information included therein that indicates possible non-compliance with any of the Core Requirements or Comprehensive Standards may lead the Commission to further review the institution, even if the prospectus is withdrawn or approval of the change is denied.
9. Although Commission staff may approve many of the substantive changes submitted by institutions and described in this policy, staff will automatically refer to the Commission the following cases requiring prior approval:
 - (1) a proposed substantive change submitted by an institution currently on sanction
 - (2) a proposed substantive change submitted by an institution recently removed from sanction with particular attention to those involving non-compliance with Core Requirement 2.11.1 or Comprehensive Standard 3.10.1 dealing with financial health
 - (3) a proposed substantive change submitted by an institution currently on reimbursement for Title IV federal funding

- (4) the application of an institution initiating coursework, credit certificates, or degree programs at a more advanced level than currently approved by the Commission, excluding the initiation of programs moving the institution from Level III to IV or from Level V to VI, which are normally reviewed by staff, and
 - (5) the prospectus of an institution planning a merger/consolidation.
10. If an institution fails to report or to gain approval of a substantive change prior to its implementation and the nature of that change is not described in the list in item 9 above, the substantive change will be reviewed and, if possible, acted upon by staff. The issue of late submission, however, will be referred to the Commission for action. If an institution fails to report or to gain approval of a substantive change prior to its implementation and the proposed change is among those included in the list in item 9 above, both the prospectus/application and the issue of late submission will be referred to the Commission for action.
 11. All final decisions regarding the accreditation status of an institution are made by the Board of Trustees. Denial of substantive change and the imposition of sanctions are not appealable actions.
 12. Substantive changes of the types described in Procedures One and Two normally will not affect an institution's cycle of reaffirmation of accreditation. Mergers and consolidations will change the institution's reaffirmation cycle as detailed in Procedure 3, of this document.
 13. Following the approval of a level change by the Commission, an institution may not initiate additional programs at the new degree level until after the Commission takes positive action on its continued accreditation following the Substantive Change Committee visit authorized at the time of approval.

Fees and Expenses

1. Fees related to the review of an application/prospectus

The following fees will be assessed to institutions for the review of an application or prospectus:

- \$300 For an institution seeking review of a substantive change prospectus or application for level change
- \$150 Per institution for a collaborative effort between two member institutions seeking review of a single prospectus
- \$100 Per institution for a collaborative effort among three or more member institutions seeking review of a single prospectus

2. Fees related to Substantive Change Committee visits

In addition to the fee assessed for reviewing the substantive change prospectus, the following fees will be assessed to an institution hosting a Substantive Change Committee visit:

- The actual cost of the committee. (Includes travel, lodging, food, and related expenses), plus
- 25 percent of the total cost of the committee

Current Standards and Policies Addressing Unreported Substantive Change

1. Principles of Accreditation, Comprehensive Standard 3.12.1

The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes.

2. "Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports – Policy Statement"

If an institution fails to report a substantive change that requires prior approval or prior notification, the committee will take the following actions:

1. If discovered during the off-site review. The Off-Site Review Committee will mark CS 3.12.1 out of compliance. The institution will be able to address the omission in its Focused Report and before the on-site review.
2. If discovered during the on-site review. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee will mark CS 3.12.1 out of compliance and write a recommendation. The institution will address the recommendation in its response to the Commission.

3. "The Review of Unreported Substantive Changes Requiring Notification or Approval Prior to Implementation – Policy Statement"

Unreported substantive changes requiring prior notification or prior approval come to the attention of the Commission through two means: (1) information discovered by the institution or by the Commission between periods of formal review by the Commission and (2) information discovered during an off-site or an on-site review by the Commission. The procedure for handling such unreported substantive changes is as follows:

1. Upon discovery, the Institution formally notifies the President of the Commission on Colleges of the unreported substantive change. The letter of notification must include the date of the original implementation of the change. A completed prospectus or application should accompany the letter for cases outlined in Procedure 1.
2. Commission staff will review the substantive change notification; the prospectus, if required; and any additional information that may have been requested. Following analysis, Commission staff will recommend to the President of the Commission one of the following actions:
 - (1) approve the program, with or without a site visit;
 - (2) refer the prospectus to the Commission for review at its next meeting (June or December); or
 - (3) acknowledge receipt of the notification and indicate that the change will be included in the scope of the institution's accreditation.
3. The policy issue of failure to report a substantive change will be forwarded automatically to the Commission for action at its next meeting, if the change required prior approval. If the change required prior notification only, the issue of failure to report will be addressed in correspondence from the President of the Commission.
4. If the unreported substantive change requiring prior notification or prior approval is discovered during the institution's off-site or on-site review for reaffirmation, the Commission will follow its policy as described on page 1 of "Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports". If it is discovered during review by another type of Commission committee, the review committee will write a recommendation. The recommendation will ask the institution to report the change to the Commission and to provide in its response to the Committee Report a statement describing internal procedures established that would ensure future substantive change reporting and evidence that the procedures have been implemented. The institution's response will be forwarded to the Commission for action on failure to report a substantive change.

Failure to Comply with Reporting Requirements

If an institution fails to follow the substantive change policy and procedures of the Commission on Colleges, it may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the institution's case may be referred to the Commission for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership.

Revised for the Principles of Accreditation: February 2004

Revised: Commission on Colleges, December 2006

Adopted: Commission on Colleges, June 2008

Revised: Board of Trustees, Commission on Colleges, June 2009

PROCEDURE ONE

The Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Notification and Approval Prior to Implementation

Changes Requiring Notification and Approval

Substantive changes requiring notification, submission of an application or a prospectus, and approval by the Commission on Colleges prior to implementation by the institution are as follows:

- Initiating **coursework, certificates, or degree programs at a more advanced level** than those previously approved by the Commission (Examples: an associate degree granting college initiating bachelor's degrees or a four-year institution initiating degrees at the master's level.) **Institutions may not offer individual credit courses or programs beyond the level of current accreditation.** Institutions requesting a level change should complete an *Application for Members Seeking Accreditation at a More Advanced Degree Level*, not a prospectus.

The Commission classifies institutions according to the highest degree level offered by an institution. Those classifications are as follows:

Level I	Offers the associate degree as the highest degree
Level II	Offers the baccalaureate degree as the highest degree
Level III	Offers the master's degree as the highest degree
Level IV	Offers the master's and specialist degree as the highest degrees
Level V	Offers three or fewer doctorate degrees as highest degrees
Level VI	Offers four or more doctorate degrees

An institution adding a doctorate degree causing it to be reclassified from Level V to Level VI is required only to inform the Commission of the additional doctorate in order for the Commission to reclassify the institution within the Commission's data base.

Applications for a change from Level III to Level IV will be reviewed and, if possible, approved by staff.

- Initiating **programs at a lower degree level** - normally pertaining to programs that are significantly different from current degrees. (Examples: a graduate institution initiating degrees at the undergraduate level, a baccalaureate degree-granting institution initiating occupational and technical degrees at the associate degree level)
- Initiating an **off-campus (additional) site** (site-based/classroom group instruction) at which students can earn **at least 50 percent of the credits toward an educational program.**

For an institution **replicating an approved educational program** that is already offered at three or more approved sites, an abbreviated prospectus consisting of a faculty roster, a description of discipline-specific library resources, a description of student support services, and a description of physical resources will suffice in lieu of responding to the requirements of a full prospectus.

- Initiating **degree completion programs.** (Example: adult or accelerated programs in management or organizational leadership). Degree completion programs usually include a compressed format with classes offered evenings or weekends to accommodate working adults, a requirement to transfer in some amount of previous college credit, and may include offering credit for career or life experience.

For degree completion programs, offering 25-49 percent of an educational program at an off-campus site does not require a full prospectus; however, the institution is required to notify the Commission and submit

a modified prospectus consisting of a faculty roster, a discipline-specific description of library/learning resources, a description of physical facilities, and a list of courses to be offered at the site.

- Initiating a **branch campus**. A branch campus is defined as a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature, (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential, (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization, and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
- Initiating **distance learning** courses and programs by which students can earn **at least 50 percent** of a program's credits offered electronically.
- Initiating any **change of legal status, governance, form of control, or ownership** of the institution. (Examples: change from private to public or from public to private, a change of ownership, a change in the legal status or form of control of the institution).
- **Expanding at the institution's current degree level** (*significant departure from current programs*). (Examples: adding a master's degree in nursing when the institution is accredited at Level III but currently offers only a master's degree in education; an institution accredited at Level II (bachelor's degrees), offering only a bachelor's degree with a major in religion, adding three new bachelor's degrees with majors in biology, business administration, and computer science). What constitutes a "significant departure" from existing programs depends on what related programs are currently in place at a given institution.
- Initiating any **change in the established mission** of the institution. (Examples: the transformation of a technical college into a comprehensive community college, the initiation by a seminary of significant liberal arts offerings, the addition by a medical college of general education offerings, the initiation of an engineering school at a liberal arts institution).
- Changing significantly the **length of a program**, substantially increasing the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program, or changing clock hours to credit hours. (Example: expanding a certificate program from 250 contact hours to 450 contact hours).
- Entering into a **teach-out agreement** or **closing an institution**. (See also the Commission policy "Closing an Institution or Program: Teach-Out Agreements.").
- **Relocating a main or branch campus**: the prospectus should demonstrate that the new facilities maintain the institution's compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.11.
- **Initiating a joint degree** program with another institution not accredited by the Commission on Colleges: The prospectus should demonstrate compliance with the Commission's policy "Collaborative Academic Arrangements: Policy and Procedures".
- **Certificate programs for workforce development**: Offering previously approved certificate programs at an unapproved off-campus site requires approval prior to implementation. Similarly, offering a certificate program that is a significant departure from existing approved certificate programs requires approval prior to implementation. The Commission will accept an abbreviated prospectus consisting of the name of the certificate, date of implementation, the complete physical address of the off-campus site (if applicable), descriptions of courses offered, and a faculty roster.

Time of Notification

An institution undergoing substantive change requiring prior approval must provide written notification of the change to the President of the Commission six months in advance of implementation of the substantive change. The only exception to this deadline is the initiation of programs offered at a more advanced degree level. This change requires twelve months advance written notification.

If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact Commission staff for consultation.

Submission of a Prospectus or an Application

Prospectus: After receiving notification of a proposed substantive change, the President of the Commission will ask the institution to submit a completed prospectus if one has not been submitted. The prospectus must be submitted at least three months in advance of the planned implementation date to allow ample time for review and approval. (Refer to Exhibit A for a description of information to be included in the prospectus.) Prospectuses may be submitted in print form or on CD or DVD (submit **one** copy).

Application for Member Institutions Seeking Accreditation at a More Advanced Degree Level: After receiving notification of the intent to initiate a program at a more advanced degree level, the President of the Commission will ask the institution to complete an application if one has not been submitted. The application must be submitted by April 15 for consideration at the June Board of Trustees meeting, or by October 1 for consideration at the December Board of Trustees meeting to allow ample time for review and approval. The Application for Level Change form can be found in Exhibit B of this document. **Four copies** of the completed application should be submitted to the President of the Commission as a print document or on CD or DVD.

An institution may not initiate any additional degree programs at the more advanced degree level until **after** the Board of Trustees has taken positive action on its continued accreditation following a Substantive Change Committee visit

Staff Options

Upon receipt of a substantive change **prospectus** not automatically referred to the Board of Trustees for approval, a Commission staff member will review the prospectus and any supporting material submitted by the institution and will recommend to the President of the Commission one of the actions listed below:

1. accept the prospectus and approve the program, with or without a site visit, or
2. refer the prospectus to the Committee on Compliance and Reports (standing committee of the Commission) for review.

Upon receipt of an **application** for initiating coursework or programs at a more advanced degree level, the application will be forwarded *automatically* to the Board of Trustees for review and approval at its next scheduled meeting: June or December. (See page 6, item 9 for a complete list of substantive changes automatically referred to the Board of Trustees for approval.) Exceptions are for institutions moving from Level III to Level IV, or from Level V to Level VI, which are reviewed by staff.

Options of the Committees on Compliance and Reports Following Review of the Prospectus or of the Application

Prospectus: If the President of the Commission refers a prospectus to the Committee on Compliance and Reports, the Committee will review the prospectus and any additional material submitted, and will recommend one of the following actions:

1. accept the prospectus and approve the program, with or without a site visit. A site visit is required within six months of the initiation of the following approved substantive changes:
 - a. consolidation/merger
 - b. a branch campus
 - c. an off-campus site at which a student can earn at least 50 percent of the credit toward an educational program, if any of the following applies: the institution (1) has a total of three or fewer additional locations, or (2) has not demonstrated, to the Commission's satisfaction, that it has a proven record of effective educational oversight of additional locations, or (3) has been placed on Commission sanction or is subject to some limitation on its accreditation
 - d. a change of ownership resulting in a change of control.
2. defer action and seek additional information
3. deny approval of the substantive change and continue the institution's accreditation.

Application for Member Institutions Seeking Accreditation at a More Advanced Degree Level: An application for offering more advanced degree programs is automatically referred to the Committees on Compliance and Reports, except for a change in degree levels from III to IV and from V to VI, which are reviewed by staff. The Committee will review the application and any additional material submitted, and will recommend one of the following actions:

1. accept the application and approve the program, with a site visit within six months of the initiation of the substantive change
2. defer action and seek additional information
3. deny approval of the substantive change and continue the institution's accreditation.

Preparation for a Substantive Change Committee Visit

When a Substantive Change Committee is authorized, it is charged with determining the institution's continued compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation* following the initiation of the change. The visit will occur within six months of initiation of the change. In preparation for this visit, the institution will complete the appropriate substantive change documentation template, which cites relevant Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards and Federal Requirements, and the roster of faculty members who will be teaching in the program. These materials should be provided to the Institution's Commission staff representative and members of the Committee in advance of its visit. Both the template and the Faculty Roster form are available on the Commission's Web site. The institution's Commission staff representative will inform the institution of the composition and schedule for the Committee.

Options of the Committees on Compliance and Reports Following Review by a Substantive Change Committee

The report of the Substantive Change Committee, together with the response of the institution to the recommendations contained in that report, will be reviewed by the Committee on Compliance and Reports. The Committee on Compliance and Reports may recommend one of the following actions:

1. continue the institution in accreditation, with or without a monitoring report, with or without sanctions of Warning or Probation
2. discontinue accreditation

PROCEDURE TWO

The Review of Substantive Changes Requiring Only Notification Prior to Implementation

Changes Requiring Notification Only

Substantive changes requiring an institution to notify the Commission on Colleges prior to implementation by the institution are as follows:

1. For **site-based/classroom group instruction** (*where the instructor is present*)
 - a. Initiating an off-campus site at which a student may earn more than 25 percent and less than 50 percent of credits toward a program. For degree-completion programs for which 25-49 percent of a program's credits are available at an off-campus instructional site, see Procedure One (p. 10), "Initiating off-campus site-based classroom instruction at which students can earn at least 50 percent of the credits toward the educational program."
 - b. Adding significantly different programs (*already approved* for the institution) for which 50 percent or more of the credit may be earned at a currently approved off-campus site (does not apply to new sites)
2. For **distance learning/technology-based** group or individual **instruction** (*where the instructor and student are geographically separated*)
 - a. Offering credit courses via distance learning/technology-based instruction by which students can obtain at least 25 but less than 50 percent of their credits toward an educational program
 - b. Adding programs (*approved for the institution*) that are significantly different from previously reported programs offered through distance learning. Once an institution has been approved to offer 50 percent or more of a program via distance learning, it need only notify the Commission when approved programs that are significantly different from its current distance learning repertoire are added to the array of distance learning programs.
3. Initiating programs/courses delivered through **contractual agreement or consortium**. Clinical agreements such as for internships and articulation agreements among institutions that are members of the Commission need not be reported.
4. **Relocating** an approved off-campus instructional site

Time of Notification

An institution undergoing substantive change must provide written notification of the change to the President of the Commission **prior to implementation**. The letter must include the date of implementation of the proposed change, and for an off-campus site, the complete physical address of the proposed location. **If an institution is unclear as to whether a change is substantive in nature, it should contact Commission staff for consultation.**

Staff Options

Upon receipt and review of the substantive change notification, Commission staff will recommend one of the following options to the President of the Commission:

1. acknowledge receipt of the notification and indicate that the change will be included in the scope of the institution's accreditation
2. acknowledge receipt of the notification and request additional information.

Upon receipt of additional information, if requested, Commission staff may recommend one of the following options to the President of the Commission:

1. acknowledge receipt of the additional information and include the change in the scope of the institution's accreditation,
2. refer the substantive change to the Board of Trustees for review,
3. authorize a substantive change visit,
4. take other action as may be appropriate.

PROCEDURE THREE

Procedure for the Review and Approval of Consolidations/Mergers

Definition

The Commission defines a **consolidation** as the combination or transfer of the assets of at least two distinct institutions (corporations) to that of a newly-formed institution (corporation), and defines a **merger** as the acquisition by one institution of another institution's assets. For the purposes of accreditation, consolidations and mergers are considered substantive changes requiring review by the Board of Trustees. (Examples include: a senior college acquiring a junior college, a degree-granting institution acquiring a non-degree-granting institution, two junior or senior colleges consolidating to form a new institution, or an institution accredited by the Commission on Colleges merging with a non-accredited institution).

Procedures for a COC Member Institution Initiating a Consolidation/Merger with another COC Member Institution(s)

Time of Notification: The chief executive officers of the member institutions undergoing merger/consolidation must provide written notification of the change to the President of the Commission on Colleges **six months in advance** of the designated date for final approval of the consolidation/merger by the new institution's governing board. Upon notification, the President of the Commission will ask the institutions involved in the consolidation/merger to submit a combined written prospectus.

Submission of the Prospectus: The Board of Trustees meets in June and in December. The prospectus for substantive change must be submitted to the Commission office by **April 15** for review and consideration at the June meeting, and by **October 1** for consideration at the December meeting. The prospectus must describe how each institution plans to continue to meet the *Principles* while implementing the change. (*Please refer to Exhibit A for descriptions of information to be included in the prospectus.*) **Four** copies of the prospectus should be submitted to the President of the Commission in print form or on CD or DVD.

Review Process: The President of the Commission will forward the institutions' prospectus to the Board of Trustees. If the prospectus is accepted, the Board will approve the consolidation/merger of the institutions involved pending final approval of the consolidation/merger by the new institution's governing board. It also will authorize the appointment of a Substantive Change Committee to visit the new institution to determine ongoing compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*. After the Board has acted favorably on the prospectus and the newly-formed institution has received final authority from its governing board, the institutions involved in the consolidation/merger will be considered one accredited institution.

The Substantive Change Committee visit will occur within six months after the Board of Trustees' approval and the institutional governing board's final approval of the consolidation/merger. The report of the Substantive Change Committee, together with the response of the institution to any recommendations contained in that report, will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees. Following review, the Board of Trustees will (1) continue the new institution in accreditation or (2) impose sanctions for failure to maintain compliance with the *Principles*.

If the Commission does not approve the prospectus for a consolidation or merger and the institutions do not proceed with the change, the COC-accredited institutions will maintain their separately accredited status. However, if they continue with the change without prior approval, all institutions participating in the merger/consolidation could lose their accreditation. The newly-formed institution may apply for accreditation by the Commission on Colleges in keeping with the Commission's procedures for applicant institutions.

Changes to the Reaffirmation Cycle: The newly consolidated/merged institution will be required to achieve reaffirmation of accreditation within five years following the Board of Trustee's action to continue accreditation. The institution will then maintain the normal ten-year reaffirmation cycle. If the Board of Trustees determines that the substantive change adversely affects each member's continued compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, the accreditation of all member institutions involved will be placed in jeopardy.

Procedures for a COC Member Institution Initiating a Consolidation/Merger with a Non-COC Accredited Institution

Time of Notification: The chief executive officer of the COC-accredited institution undergoing consolidation/merger must provide written notification of the change to the President of the Commission **six months in advance** of the designated date for final approval of the consolidation/merger by the new institution's governing board. Upon notification, the President of the Commission will ask the COC-accredited institution to submit a written prospectus.

Submission of the Prospectus: The Board of Trustees meets in June and in December. The prospectus for substantive change must be submitted to the Commission office by **April 15** for review and consideration at the June meeting, and by **October 1** for consideration at the December meeting. The prospectus must describe how the member institution plans to continue to meet the *Principles* while implementing the change. *(Please refer to Exhibit A for descriptions of information to be included in the prospectus.)* **Four** copies of the prospectus should be submitted to the President of the Commission in print form or on CD or DVD.

Review Process: Upon receipt of the prospectus, the President of the Commission will refer it to the Board of Trustees for review. Following review, the Board of Trustees will (1) accept the prospectus and authorize the appointment of a Substantive Change Committee to visit the institution, (2) deny acceptance of the prospectus, or (3) defer action to the next Board of Trustees meeting, pending submission of additional information.

If the prospectus is accepted, the institutions can begin implementation of the consolidation/merger. During this time, the accreditation status of the COC-accredited member institution will remain unchanged until after the consolidation/merger has been approved by the Board of Trustees.

A Substantive Change Committee visit will occur within six months after its authorization. The report of the Substantive Change Committee, together with the response of the member institution to any recommendations contained in that report, shall be reviewed by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will (1) approve the consolidation/merger of the newly-formed institution, (2) deny the consolidation/merger for failure of the new institution to comply with the *Principles*, or (3) defer action.

If the Board of Trustees does not accept the prospectus for a consolidation/merger or the Board of Trustees does not approve the consolidation/merger following the visit by the Substantive Change Committee and the COC-accredited institution does not proceed with the change, the COC-accredited institution will maintain its separately accredited status. However, if the member institution continues with the change without prior or final approval, it could lose its accreditation with the Commission. The newly-formed institution may then apply for accreditation with the Board of Trustees in keeping with the Commission's accreditation procedures for applicant institutions.

Changes to the Reaffirmation Cycle: The newly consolidated/merged institution will be required to achieve reaffirmation of accreditation within five years following the Commission's action to continue accreditation. The institution will then maintain the normal ten-year reaffirmation of accreditation cycle. If the Board of Trustees determines that the substantive change adversely affects each member's continued compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, the accreditation of the COC member institution involved shall be placed in jeopardy.

The Content of the Substantive Change Prospectus

One copy of a prospectus should be submitted to the Commission on Colleges on paper or on CD or DVD and include all applicable information below regarding the change. **Documents will not be accepted via e-mail.** The prospectus should include a concisely worded narrative of the information requested in this document. A prospectus normally does not exceed **25 pages** plus appendices. Please note that the Commission on Colleges reserves the right to make amendments to the requirements outlined below for certain types of changes.

In lieu of a prospectus, Commission staff will accept documentation submitted for approval to a system office or to a state coordinating or governing board, *provided such documentation includes all the information required in a prospectus and includes an index correlating the submitted materials with the corresponding information required in a prospectus.*

Reminder: An institution initiating a level change must complete an **Application for Member Institutions Seeking Accreditation at a More Advanced Degree Level** and submit it in quadruplicate *in lieu of completing a prospectus.*

The following guidelines are generic; each prospectus should be tailored to focus on the specific change being proposed.

Cover Sheet for Substantive Change Prospectus

- Include name, phone number, and e-mail address of person to be contacted with questions regarding the prospectus
- List degrees that the institution is authorized to grant. As a subset of each degree, list majors available. *(Photocopy from catalog is acceptable)*
- List certificate, diploma and degree programs which are related to the proposed program(s)
- List institutional strengths that facilitate the offering of the proposed program(s)

1. **ABSTRACT** (limit to one page or less)

Describe the proposed change; list the initial date of implementation; projected number of students, if applicable; description of primary target audience; projected life of the program (single cohort or ongoing); instructional delivery methods and, if the change involves the initiation of an off-campus site, its complete physical address,

2. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

*Provide a clear statement of the nature and purpose of the change in the context of the institution's mission and goals; evidence of the legal authority for the change (if authorization is required by the governing board or the state); and whether the proposed degree program or similar program is offered on the main campus or at other **approved** off-campus sites.*

3. **ASSESSMENT OF NEED AND PROGRAM PLANNING/APPROVAL**

Briefly discuss the rationale for the change, including an assessment of need; evidence of inclusion of the change in the institution's ongoing planning and evaluation processes; and documentation that faculty and other groups were involved in the review and approval of the new site or program.

4. **DESCRIPTION OF THE CHANGE**

Provide a description of the proposed change, including the specific outcomes and learning objectives of the program, a schedule of proposed course offerings. In the case of a change involving the initiation of a branch campus, an off-site program, indicate the educational program(s) to be offered. Describe any differences in admission, curriculum, or graduation requirements for students enrolled at the new site(s), or any special arrangements for grading, transcripts, or transfer policies. Describe administrative oversight to ensure the quality of the program or services to be offered.

5. **FACULTY**

Provide a complete roster (using the [Faculty Roster \(Faculty Roster Instructions\)](#)) of those faculty employed to teach in the program(s), including a description of those faculty members' academic qualifications and other experiences relevant to the courses to be taught in the program in question, course load in the new program, and course work taught in other programs currently offered. Provide a narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the program; and describe the impact of the new initiative on faculty workload.

For distance learning programs, describe processes in place to ensure that students have structured access to faculty and document compliance with the Commission policy "Distance and Correspondence Education". For graduate programs, document scholarship and research capability of faculty; for doctoral programs, document faculty experience in directing student research.

6. **LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES**

*Describe library and information resources—general as well as specific to the program—and staffing and services that are in place to support the initiative. If reliant upon other libraries, describe those collections and their relevance to the proposed program(s) and include a copy of formal agreements in the appendix. Relative to electronic resources, describe how students and faculty will access information, training for faculty and students in the use of online resources, and staffing and services available to students and faculty. If you are citing electronic databases accessed through consortial or statewide groups, please describe the discipline-specific suites of resources and not just the name of the consortium (such as Viva, Tex-Share, Galileo, Louis, etc.). For doctoral programs, document **discipline-specific refereed journals and primary source materials**.*

7. **PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

Provide a description of physical facilities and equipment to support this initiative. Assess the impact that the proposed change will have on existing programs and services.

8. **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

Provide a business plan that includes **all** of the following:

- a. a description of financial resources to support the change, including a budget for the first year (a three-year budget is requested for a new branch campus)
- b. projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow
- c. the amount of resources going to institutions or organizations for contractual or support services
- d. the operational, management, and physical resources available for the change.

Provide contingency plans in case required resources do not materialize.

For consolidations/mergers, and for institutions currently on sanction with the Board of Trustees for financial reasons, provide a copy of the most recent audit (audits from all institutions involved in consolidations/mergers).

9. **EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT**

Describe how the institution assesses overall institutional effectiveness as well as the means used to monitor and ensure the quality of the degree program(s), off-campus site(s), or other changes. Summarize procedures for systematic evaluation of instructional results, including the process for monitoring and evaluating programs at the new site, as well as using the results of evaluation to improve institutional programs, services, and operations. For compressed time frames describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in traditional formats have been achieved.

10. **APPENDICES**

Appendices may include items such as copies of library and other cooperative or contractual agreements, the actual Faculty Roster document, course descriptions, and other items of documentation to support the narrative.

June 2009
Revised 9 July 2010



**APPLICATION FOR A MEMBER INSTITUTION
SEEKING ACCREDITATION
AT A MORE ADVANCED DEGREE LEVEL**

Name of Institution:	
Location:	
Implementation Date	
Name and Title of Individual Completing the Application:	Telephone:
	Internet Address:
	Fax Number:
Date Submitted:	

SUBMIT FOUR COPIES OF THIS COMPLETED FORM TO:

*Dr. Belle S. Wheelan, President
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097
(404) 679-4500*

Due dates:

For consideration by the Board of Trustees in June: **April 15**

For consideration by the Board of Trustees in June: **October 1**

INSTRUCTIONS

When initiating course work or programs beyond the degree level currently approved by the Commission on Colleges, an institution must complete an "Application for Level Change" with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The application consists of two parts: Part A - Description of the proposed programs/courses to be offered at a more advanced degree level; and Part B - Description of Ongoing Compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement*. The two parts combined constitute a primary source of information used by the Commission on Colleges to award membership at the new degree level.

For purposes of accreditation, the Commission classifies institutions according to the highest degree level offered by an institution. Those classifications are as follows:

Level I	Offers the associate degree as the highest degree
Level II	Offers the baccalaureate degree as the highest degree
Level III	Offers the master's degree as the highest degree
Level IV	Offers the master's and specialist degree as the highest degrees
Level V	Offers three or fewer doctorate degrees as highest degrees
Level VI	Offers four or more doctorate degrees

Note: An institution adding a doctorate degree causing it to be reclassified from Level V to Level VI is required to only inform the Commission of the additional doctorate in order for the Commission to reclassify the institution within the Commission's data base.

When completing the application, please adhere to the following:

1. In cases in which year-end information is requested, use the most recently completed fiscal year. Report enrollment information for the most recent academic year.
2. Use "NA" to mark items not applicable to the institution.
3. **Four** copies (on CD, DVD or hardcopy) are required by the Commission on Colleges. The institution should keep one completed copy for future use.
4. Applications are reviewed by the Board of Trustees twice a year: during meetings in June and in December. For review during the December meeting, the completed application must be submitted by **no later than October 1**; for review during the June' meeting, the completed application must be submitted by **no later than April 15**.

PART A

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMS/COURSES TO BE OFFERED AT A MORE ADVANCED DEGREE LEVEL

NAME(S) OF NEW PROGRAM(S). Please be specific (e.g., Bachelor of Arts degree in English).

GENERAL INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

Name of agency that has legally authorized the institution to provide the new degree program:

Date institution plans to enroll first students at the new degree level:

Date institution projects it will graduate the first regular class at the new degree level:

Enrollment Data

Current Enrollment - Please refer to your most recent completed Institutional Profile and report the following enrollment data for the current term:

a.	Total Full-Time Undergraduate Enrollment (carrying a load of 12 or more credit hours) (Section Two, part A, line 1 of enrollment profile)	
b.	Total Full-Time Post-Baccalaureate Enrollment (Carrying a load of 9 or more credit hours) (Section Two, part A, line 2 of enrollment profile)	
c.	Total FTE Part-Time Undergraduate Enrollment (carrying fewer than 12 credit hours) (Section Two, part A, line 3b of enrollment profile)	
d.	Total FTE Part-Time Post-Baccalaureate Enrollment (carrying fewer than 9 credit hours) (Section Two, part A, line 4b of enrollment profile)	
e.	Total Non-Credit Enrollment (Section Two, part A, line 6b of enrollment profile)	
	Total of all figures reported in a-e above. (Section Two, part A, line 7 of enrollment profile)	

Projected Enrollment - Please indicate below the number of students projected to enroll in the new degree program(s):

a. Full-Time Enrollment	
b. Part-Time Enrollment (headcount)	
c. Non-Credit Enrollment (headcount)	
d. Projected Total	

Current Educational Programs

Levels of Program Offerings (Check all that apply)

- Less than one year of work beyond grade 12
- At least one but less than two years of work beyond grade 12
- Associate degree-granting program of at least two years
- Diploma or certificate programs of at least two but less than four years of work beyond grade 12
- Four or five-year baccalaureate degree-granting program
- First professional degree
- Master's and/or work beyond the first professional degree
- Work beyond the master's level but not at the doctor's level (Specialist in Education)
- A doctor of philosophy or equivalent degree
- Other (Specify)

Ownership of branches and other institutions:

Provide as an appendix a list of every postsecondary institution owned by the corporation and the degree programs offered, its address, and the name and title of each institution's chief administrator.

Indicate whether each of those institutions is accredited and the name of the accrediting agency.

PROPOSED PROGRAMS/COURSES TO BE OFFERED AT A MORE ADVANCED DEGREE LEVEL

1. Describe the rationale for the new program(s), including an assessment of need.

2. List and describe the new program(s), including the following:
 - a. General institutional admissions requirements and any separate admission requirements for the new program(s).

 - b. Completion requirements, including the number of credits which must be earned in programs at the new degree level. Include in the description the number and distribution of general education credits to be completed, the number of credits to be earned in the major or area of concentration, the number of electives to be completed, and other requirements which students must meet in order to receive a degree.

 - c. The curriculum and program oversight by the institution

 - d. Mode of instruction

 - e. Means for evaluating student achievement

3. If the proposed programs/courses are to be offered at off-campus instructional sites, list each specific location, its address, the mode of delivery, and the percentage of the educational program that will be offered at each site.

FACULTY RESOURCES AND QUALIFICATIONS

1. Describe faculty resources needed for the new program(s). Include the institution's plans to use current faculty to teach the new courses and any plans for additional faculty.
2. Provide as an appendix a completed Faculty Roster Form which provides information to the Commission regarding the qualifications of faculty teaching in the new degree program(s). Please follow the Instructions for the Form and number all pages.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Identify resources to support the new programs, including

- financial resources (an itemized budget for the first year and a copy of the most recent audit must be supplied)
- library/learning resources
- physical facilities
- instructional equipment.

PART B

DESCRIPTION OF ONGOING COMPLIANCE WITH THE *PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION*

CORE REQUIREMENTS

For each of the Core Requirements listed below, document that the institution complies with the requirement and describe the anticipated impact of the level change on that aspect of the institution. Note: When completing this section, the institution may refer to responses in Part A instead of submitting duplicate information and materials. **Documentation should be referred to in the narrative and its location in an appendix cited.**

An institution seeking membership at a more advanced degree level agrees to disclose any and all information which the Commission may request to carry out its evaluating and accrediting function.

- 2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. **(Degree-granting Authority)**

Minimum Documentation Required

A copy of the charter or letter of authorization from the appropriate agency/organization indicating that the institution may award the new degree programs.

- 2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board on which both the presiding officer and a majority of the other members are neither civilian employees of the military nor active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting board members are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

(Governing Board)

Minimum Documentation Required

Evidence that the governing board has approved the new degree program(s).

- 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined and published mission statement specific to the institution and appropriate to an institution of higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

Minimum Documentation Required

- 1. Copy of mission statement as it appears in the catalog and other institutional documents. Indicate any change to the mission statement which accommodates the initiation of new programs at a more advanced degree level.*
- 2. A description of how the mission statement was developed and approved and how it is reviewed.*

3. *A list of institutional publications where the statement of purpose is described.*

- 2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

Minimum Documentation Required

1. *A copy of the institution's strategic plan, including how the plan relates to the new degree program(s). Indicate how the new degree program(s) are integrated with other units of the institution.*
2. *A brief description of the institution's planning and evaluation processes and identification of who is responsible for ensuring that the processes function systematically. Include an explanation of how the planning and evaluation processes intersect with the budgeting process.*
3. *A description of the educational goals and expected outcomes in the new degree program(s).*
4. *A description of the process for determining how achievement of educational goals will be ascertained in the new degree program(s) and a timeline by which the processes function.*
5. *A description of how the new program(s) will be evaluated and how the findings will be used to make any necessary changes to the programs.*

2.7

2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level, at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level, or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. **(Program Length)**

2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program Content)**

2.7.3 In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education course. **(General Education)**

2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. (See Commission policy "Core Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternate Approach.") **(Course work for Degrees)**

Minimum Documentation Required

1. *Catalog containing information regarding the institution's degree programs.*

2. *A description of each new program, the number of hours required for each, and the minimum and maximum period of time that a student has to obtain each new degree.*
3. *If the new programs are undergraduate, provide a list of courses in the required general education core and the number of hours required.*
4. *Written purpose and goals for the general education program. Course description of each course designated as a "general education" course.*
5. *A justification and rationale for program equivalency, if appropriate.*
6. *Justification of an alternative approach to offering courses in the new programs, if applicable.*

2.8 The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. **(Faculty)**

Minimum Documentation Required

1. *A faculty roster for the program. (See Part A "Faculty Resources and Qualifications" for directions for reporting.)*
2. *A list of full-time faculty and a list of part-time faculty in the program(s). A description of loads and duties (such as advising, committee service, curriculum/program review) establishing the adequacy of the number of full-time faculty.*
3. *A list of all faculty members who have been assigned supervisory responsibility for a major within each new program, the major for which the faculty member is responsible, the professional and scholarly credentials of the faculty member, and a list of courses to be taught by the faculty member.*
4. *A copy of the Faculty Handbook.*

2.9 The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning Resources and Services)**

Minimum Documentation Required

1. *Description of library/learning resources that have been acquired to support the new program(s) or copies of contracts with institutions that provide library services or access to learning resources (written, formal agreements with other libraries for resource materials and services). Describe the relevancy of their collections to the proposed program.*
2. *Financial plan for supporting the expansion of library resources/the contracts needed for the new program(s) and the focus of that support.*

2.10 The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student Support Services)**

Minimum Documentation Required

1. *A description of student development services specifically relevant to the new programs.*
2. *A copy of the Student Handbook*
3. *Organizational chart for Student Support Services.*

2.11

2.11.1 The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with *Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services*

issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a system-wide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or Standard Review Report) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board. **(Financial Resources)**

2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. **(Physical Resources)**

Minimum Documentation Required

1. *A copy of the audit and management letter from the most recent audited fiscal year.*
2. *A projected budget (revenues and expenses) for the first year of operation of the new program(s).*
3. *A description of the effect of the new program(s) on the total budget of the institution.*
4. *Describe the physical resources that will be used by the new program(s) and document their adequacy*