

Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes

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Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines

Definitions

- Off-campus instructional site: A location
 - geographically apart from an institution's sole main campus and
 - where instruction is delivered.
- Branch campus: A special form of off-campus instructional site
 - that is geographically apart from an institution's main campus,
 - where instruction is delivered, and
 - is independent of the main campus of an institution. An off-campus instructional site is independent of the main campus if it
 - is permanent;
 - offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential;
 - has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
 - has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
- Program: For the purpose of an off-campus instructional site, a for-credit credential for which an institution awards a degree, diploma, certificate, or other credential at any level of instruction.

- Percentage of program instruction: The percentage of the *total* instruction required to earn a credential measured in credit hours, clock hours, competencies, or other generally accepted measure of progress to completion.

Guidelines

- Off-campus instructional site requirements apply without exception to dual enrollment sites.
- If instruction is delivered by distance education (synchronously or asynchronously) to a location geographically apart from an institution’s sole main campus
— AND —
if a student is required to be at the location to receive instruction, then the location is an off-campus instructional site.
- A clinical training site at which no didactic instruction is delivered is *not* an off-campus instructional site.
- A location at which no instruction is delivered to students is *not* an off-campus instructional site, e.g., a distance education video studio (with no students physically present), an off-campus student services complex, or administrative offices.
- Site names must be unique for an institution; an institution cannot have multiples sites with identical names. Check the SACSCOC website or institutional portal to verify before submitting.
- Site addresses must be unique for an institution; an institution cannot have multiple sites with identical addresses. Check the SACSCOC website or institutional portal to verify before submitting.

Off-campus Instructional Site Notification

(See also Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines.)

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An off-campus instructional site at which 25-49% of a program’s instruction is delivered requires notification prior to implementation.

Instruction at a site may cross the 25% notification threshold any time after the institution submits notification; the institution does not have to wait for a SACSCOC response to implement (note this applies to site notification only, not to site approval).

**What to submit**

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution's existing site).
3. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers).
4. The intended implementation date.

Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus)

(See also Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines.)

An off-campus instructional site at which 50% or more of a program's instruction is delivered requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation.

An off-campus instructional site may qualify as a branch campus; refer to the federally defined branch campus criteria under *Off-campus Instructional Site Definitions and Guidelines*. Before submitting a prospectus for approval of branch campus, ensure – and demonstrate in the prospectus – *all* branch campus criteria are met. A site name may not include “branch” or “branch campus” unless approved as a branch campus as defined in policy.

There are two site approval pathways:

- approval by extensive review, and
- approval by limited review.

The pathway available to an institution depends on

- the number of sites previously approved by extensive review, and
- the status of an institution as explained below for each pathway.

Extensive Review

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An extensive review has two components:

- an institutional-level review, and
- a site-specific review.

The purpose of the institutional-level review is to ensure institutional capacity and planning to offer courses away from its main campus and to ensure quality across locations. Institutional capacity and planning considers

- adequacy of faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support services at sites;
- sufficient fiscal and administrative capacity to add additional sites;
- clear academic control of sites;
- regular evaluation of all sites;
- financial stability of the institution;
- engagement in long-range planning for expansion;
- and other factors.

The site-specific review considers

- physical resources including specialized equipment or materials at a site,
- qualifications of faculty at the site,
- adequate financial resources and financial planning for the site,
- adequacy of library and learning/information resource available to students at the site, adequacy of student support services available to student at the site,
- and other factors.

There are two extensive review approval methods:

- **Approval method one** – Approval of an off-campus instructional site by extensive review method one is required if the institution, at the time a site prospectus is submitted to SACSCOC,
 - has less than two sites approved under the extensive review criteria and process,
—OR—
 - has not successfully completed at least one reaffirmation of accreditation,
—OR—
 - is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

Approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees based on a prospectus review: The institution prepares and submits an off-campus instructional site by extensive review prospectus. The prospectus, in part, addresses the requirements listed above; refer to Appendix A of this document for guidance and requirements. An extensive review prospectus is reviewed by the full SACSCOC Board of Trustees at a regularly scheduled biannual meeting, usually in June and December. Submission due

REQUIRES	
Approval Full Board of Trustees	
COMMITTEE VISIT	
Contingent	
FEE	
Yes	
Yes	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

dates are published in this policy and on the SACSCOC website.

An institution may submit a single prospectus for up to ten off-campus instructional sites provided program offerings are *identical* across all sites; otherwise, a separate prospectus (or prospectuses) is required for exceptions.

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for off-campus instructional site approval by extensive review](#).

- **Approval method two** – Approval by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees based on inclusion and review at reaffirmation: An existing, approved site(s) that was (a) included as an approved site on the Institutional Summary Form submitted as part of the institution’s on-site reaffirmation review and (b) reviewed by the on-site reaffirmation committee to include the site- and institutional-level extensive review requirements, will be considered approved by extensive review after the SACSCOC Board of Trustees takes positive action on the institution’s reaffirmation. Approval method two applies to institutions reaffirmed in 2020 or afterwards.

REQUIRES
No action by the institution

Note: If an institution is on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION for a reason(s) related to an off-campus instructional site(s), approval(s) by method two may be postponed while the institution is on restriction.

Sites approved before the extensive review requirement was included in policy in 2020 are not deemed approved by extensive review except as provided by approval method two described above.

Limited Review

Subject to SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Approval of an off-campus instructional site by limited review is required if the institution, at the time a site prospectus is submitted to SACSCOC,

- has two or more sites approved under the extensive review criteria and process,
—AND—
- has successfully completed at least one reaffirmation of accreditation,
—AND—

REQUIRES
Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT
Contingent
FEE
Yes
Yes SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

- is not on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION.

Approval by limited review requires approval by the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Executive Council reviews occur year round. The prospectus submission due date depends on the planned implementation date; due dates are published in this policy and on the SACSCOC website.

An institution on SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION does not have the option of a limited review: all off-campus instructional site approvals are through the extensive review pathway only.

An institution may submit a single prospectus for up to ten off-campus instructional sites provided program offerings are *identical* across all sites; otherwise, a separate prospectus (or prospectuses) is required for exceptions.



What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for off-campus instructional site approval by limited review](#).

Off-campus Instructional Site Committee Visits

(See also *Committee Visits, International Off-campus Instructional Sites*)

A substantive change committee visit is required if *any* of the following criteria is met at the time an off-campus instructional site is approved:

- the site is a branch campus;
- the institution has less than three already-approved off-campus instructional sites — i.e., the institution's first three approved sites each require a visit;
- the institution has not successfully completed at least one reaffirmation of accreditation;
- the institution is on sanction (Warning, Probation, or Probation for Good Cause);
- any of the *International Off-campus Instructional Sites* conditions in the [Committee Visits](#) section of this policy is met; or
- the institution has not, in the professional judgment of SACSCOC staff, demonstrated effective oversight of off-campus instructional sites or if there is reason to believe the institution may not be able to meet all SACSCOC requirements at the new off-campus instructional site.

A visit, if required, is authorized by the Board of Trustees at the time of approval. The SACSCOC President is also authorized to appoint a substantive change committee.

If a committee is authorized to visit an additional location, the committee is required to determine compliance with the *Principles of Accreditation*, including verification of personnel, facilities, and resources as asserted by the institution in its application for the additional site.

Exception. An off-campus instructional site approved by the extensive review approval method two, as defined herein, is not subject to a substantive change committee visit; the site would have been subject to review as part of the institution's reaffirmation of accreditation.

Refer to the committee visits section of this policy for additional information, including additional considerations for visits to international off-campus instructional sites.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation

Definition: Moving instruction to a new location geographically separate from – i.e., non-contiguous to – the current location.

Note: If instruction is not moving but the name or physical address only of a site will change (e.g., renaming a street, changing the ZIP code, or re-branding the site), see Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change.

Guidelines and requirements:

- The new location must serve the same geographic area or the same pool of students. Otherwise, the current location must be closed (requires a teach-out plan and closure approval) and the new location subject to notification or approval.
- Instruction cannot overlap at the current location and the new location. All instruction must end at the current location no later than the beginning of instruction at the new location. If concurrent instruction is unavoidable, the current location is subject to closure approval and the new location is subject to notification or approval.
- A site relocation applies to relocating a single current location to a single new location; a current location cannot relocate to multiple other locations. If the institution is moving instruction from one location to multiple other locations, it may relocate the current location to one new location, and all additional new locations are subject to notification or approval as new off-campus instructional sites. A relocation results in no net change in the number of off-campus instructional sites of the institution.
- If the new location is an existing off-campus instructional site for the institution, moving instruction is not a site relocation: it is a closure of the current location (requires a teach-out plan and closure approval).
- An unavoidable and unforeseeable relocation may be eligible for emergency relocation. Refer to the [Emergency Temporary Relocation of Instruction](#) policy

[PDF] for guidance. Emergency relocation is available for instruction at off-campus instructional sites and the institution’s main campus.

- If relocating multiple sites, submit each relocation separately.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation – Non-branch Campus

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Relocating an off-campus instructional site that is not a branch campus requires notification prior to implementation. This equally applies to notified sites and to approved sites.



What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [\[PDF\]](#).
2. The name and address of the site at its current location. The name and address must match the name and address on record with SACSCOC. The name and addresses on record can be verified via the institutional portal or via the institutional information available to the public on the SACSCOC website.
3. The name and address of the site at its new location.
4. The intended implementation date, i.e., the effective date of the move.
5. A statement stipulating there will be no overlap of instruction at the two locations.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation – Branch Campus

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	Yes
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Relocating an off-campus instructional site that is a branch campus requires SACSCOC approval prior to implementation. A prospectus is required.

What to submit

A prospectus: Submit a substantive change prospectus using the outline provided in [Appendix A for off-campus instructional site relocation of a branch campus](#).

Off-campus Instructional Site Name or Address Change

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Changing the name or address of an off-campus instructional site requires notification prior to implementation.

Name change: A site name should be unique to the institution (i.e., no duplicate site names). The site name can include “branch” or “branch campus” only if the site has been approved as a branch campus and is on record with SACSCOC as approved as a branch campus. The name of a site should not suggest to students, prospective students, or

the public that the site is a separate institution.

Address change: If the location at which instruction is delivered *is not changing* but the address of the location is changing, then a change of address is necessary. Examples are renaming a street or road, adding a qualifier to a street name, changing a suite or room number, and changing a ZIP code. If the location at which instruction is delivered *is changing*, then that is an off-campus instructional site relocation, not an address change, and is addressed elsewhere in policy.

If the address of a site changes but there is no change to where instruction is delivered, an address change notification is appropriate.

What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The current name and address of the site. The name and address must match the name and address on record with SACSCOC. The name and addresses on record can be verified via the institutional portal or via the institutional information available to the public on the SACSCOC website.

3. The new name and/or address of the site (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution’s existing site).
4. The intended implementation date (i.e., the effective date) of the change.
5. A statement stipulating the name and/or address change does not include a change of instructional location as described above.

Off-campus Instructional Site Closure

REQUIRES	Approval Exec Council of the Board
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

Closing an off-campus instructional site requires SACSCOC approval. Closure approval equally applies to

- notified sites and
- approved sites.

All closure approvals require an acceptable teach-out plan.

For SACSCOC, a site is considered closed as of the date the institution stops admitting students to the site; closure is *not* the date of last instruction.

Closure is defined this way because SACSCOC’s approval is of the teach-out process, not the closure per se, to help ensure students have reasonable opportunities to complete their program of study as originally planned at initial matriculation and with minimal disruption and additional costs. Because closure approval is for the teach-out process, not the closure per se (i.e., not after the fact), a teach-out plan should be submitted as soon as possible after the decision is made to close. Institutional, system, or state definitions of closure must be reconciled by the institution with the SACSCOC definition.

If a program will no longer be offered at a site but the site will remain open for other programs, see program closure approval requirements under Program Closure.

A teach-out plan is due to SACSCOC as soon as possible after the institution decides to close a site.

Because time is of the essence – to provide students maximum time to consider and adapt to alternate completion plans – an institution may generally begin a site teach-out plan after it has been submitted to SACSCOC for approval. This assumes the institution completes a teach-out plan with all due care to address the requirements explained here and in the teach-out plan requirements in Appendix A. If upon review by SACSCOC the teach-out plan is incomplete or inadequate, the teach-out plan may be deferred pending additional information, explanation, or an acceptable revised teach-out plan is provided to SACSCOC. Although the institution may begin a teach-out immediately after submitting it, the closure is not approved until action is taken by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Starting and completing a teach-out plan before securing SACSCOC Board approval does not relieve the institution of its obligation to provide an acceptable teach-out plan.

The teach-out institution(s) – i.e., the institution(s) accepting displaced students from the closing off-campus instructional site – may request an exception to Standard 9.4 (institutional credits for an undergraduate degree) and/or Standard 9.5 (institutional credits for a graduate or professional degree) to accommodate students near the end of their program of study. Refer to the [Request for a Period of Noncompliance](#) policy for guidance. The institution closing its off-campus instructional site should ensure the teach-out institution(s) are aware of this option and may wish to include it in any teach-out agreement(s) executed pursuant to the closure.

What to submit

A teach-out plan: Submit a teach-out plan using the outline provided in [Appendix A for an off-campus instructional site closure](#).

Off-campus Instructional Site Re-open

REQUIRES	Notification
COMMITTEE VISIT	No
FEE	No
No	SUBJECT TO SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE RESTRICTION

An off-campus instructional site previously approved for closure may be re-opened within five years of the closure date by submitting notification. The closure date is the date the site was closed to admission, not necessarily the date of last instruction or the date SACSCOC approved the closure. If more than five years have elapsed, the site is subject to notification or approval as a new site. The name of a site may be changed concurrent with its re-opening, but the address of a site when re-opened must be the same as the address on record with the site was approved for closure.

Notes:

- A re-opened site is ineligible for relocation until at least one full academic term of instruction has been offered and completed at the site with students enrolled after the site was re-opened.
- A re-opened site is subject to review and visit by a peer review committee at the institution's next accreditation reviews.

What to submit

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. The name and address of the site as it appears on the SACSCOC letter approving the site's closure.

3. The date SACSCOC approved the site's closure and either (1) the closure's case identification number (Case ID) found on the closure approval letter or (2) a copy of the closure approval letter.
4. The name of the site upon its re-opening.
5. The intended implementation date (i.e., the effective date) of the re-opening.
6. An affirmative statement by the institution
 - a. assuring the site remains appropriate for instruction and conducive for the specific type of instruction to be delivered at the site, including any specialized instructional equipment, materials, laboratories and supplies, and instructional support materials necessary; and
 - b. assuring students at the site will have adequate access to student support services and library and learning/information resources appropriate to the instruction offered at the site.

(End of Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes)

Off-campus Instructional Site / Additional Location Changes

Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus) by Extensive Review

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. If multiple sites are proposed in a consolidated prospectus (see qualifying criteria), address each site separately, viz., the description of the physical resources and a Faculty Roster Form separated by site.
3. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution's existing site).
4. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers only).
5. The intended implementation date.
6. Indicate if the site will be a branch campus.
7. If the site will be a branch campus, demonstrate the site will meet each of the following criteria:
 - a. The site is geographically apart from an institution's main campus.
 - b. Instruction is delivered at the site.
 - c. The site is permanent.
 - d. The site offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
 - e. The site has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.
 - f. The site has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

For the institutional level review –

8. The institution must demonstrate, at an institutional level, the capacity to effectively oversee and provide ongoing support for off-campus instructional sites / additional locations (including branch campuses, as applicable), by the following:
 - a. Demonstrating how the institution will have administrative oversight of off-campus instructional sites / additional locations that ensures academic control of all off-campus instructional sites.

- b. Demonstrating how the institution will have academic assessment and evaluation processes that include the regular and robust assessment and evaluation of each of the institution's off-campus instructional sites / additional locations.
- c. Demonstrating how the institution will engage in ongoing and thorough long-range planning processes for expansion of instructional and other services to off-campus instructional sites / additional locations.
- d. Demonstrating financial resources and financial stability by submitting for review the institution's two most recent financial statement audits.

Note: *As part of the extensive review, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees will review the institution's audits and SACSCOC financial responsibility score based on financial data submitted by the institution as part of its annual financial profile. If it is not satisfied with the institution's financial stability, the SACSCOC Board of Trustee may deny approval.*

For the site-specific review –

9. Provide Common Content A – Background and Context, relative to the proposed change.
10. Describe the educational program(s) to be offered at the site. If a program to be offered at the site is a new program requiring approval, also provide the prospectus information for New Program – Approval.
11. Provide documentation of approval to operate in the state where the site is located if the site is outside of the state of the institution's main campus (in addition to the state approval evidence in Common Content A).
12. Provide the course schedule and course descriptions to be taught during the first year of operation; do not provide syllabi.
13. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change. All courses to be taught during the first year of operation must be assigned to at least one faculty member on the Faculty Roster.
14. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change.
15. Provide Common Content D - Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change.

Off-campus Instructional Site Approval (including branch campus) by Limited Review

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. If multiple sites are proposed in a consolidated prospectus (see qualifying criteria), address each site separately, viz., the description of the physical resources and a Faculty Roster Form separated by site.
3. Site name (must be unique, i.e., it cannot be the same as an institution's existing site).
4. The physical address or location of the site (i.e., no post office box numbers only).
5. The intended implementation date.
6. Indicate if the site will be a branch campus.
7. If the site will be a branch campus, demonstrate the site will meet each of the following criteria:
 - a. The site is geographically apart from an institution's main campus.
 - b. Instruction is delivered at the site.
 - c. The site is permanent.
 - d. The site offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other for-credit credential.
 - e. The site has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.
 - f. The site has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
8. Provide Common Content A – Background and Context, relative to the proposed change.
9. Describe the educational program(s) to be offered at the site. If a program to be offered at the site is a new program requiring approval, also provide the prospectus information for New Program – Approval.
10. Provide documentation of approval to operate in the state where the site is located if the site is outside of the state of the institution's main campus (in addition to the state approval evidence in Common Content A).
11. Provide the course schedule and course descriptions to be taught during the first year of operation; do not provide syllabi.
12. Provide Common Content B – Faculty Qualifications, relative to the proposed change. All courses to be taught during the first year of operation must be assigned to at least one faculty member on the Faculty Roster.
13. Provide Common Content C – Resources, relative to the proposed change.
14. Provide Common Content D – Institutional Evaluation and Assessment Processes, relative to the proposed change.

Off-campus Instructional Site Relocation - Branch Campus

Submit a prospectus to include the following:

1. A completed Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Provide the current physical address and the proposed (new) physical address of the branch campus.
3. Provide the intended implementation or effective date of the relocation.
4. Describe the rationale and need for the relocation.
5. Provide evidence the relocation has been approved by the institution's governing board and, if required, the state governing board or authority.
6. Describe the planned process for the relocation (e.g., move at one time or phase-in with date of implementation).
7. Provide the number of students to be impacted.
8. Describe the instructional methods of delivery to be used at the proposed location and if they differ from the current location.
9. Describe the programs offered at the current location and programs to be offered at the proposed location, identifying any programs that will not continue to be offered once the institution relocates.
10. Provide narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members at the new location will be adequate to support the mission and goals of the institution.
11. Describe the impact of relocation on library and learning/information resources.
12. Describe the impact of relocation on student support services.
13. Describe the physical facilities of the proposed location and demonstrate how they are adequate to appropriately serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities.
14. Describe how the institution will provide a health, safe and secure environment for all members of the campus community at the new location.
15. Describe financial resources available for the relocation, including a three-year budget.
16. Provide a contingency plan in the event required resources to fund the relocation do not materialize.
17. Describe the impact of the relocation on the assessment of student learning outcomes for each educational program.
18. Describe the impact of the relocation on the assessment of academic and student services that support student success.

Off-campus Instructional Site Closure

Submit a teach-out plan to include the following:

1. A Substantive Change Cover Sheet [[PDF](#)].
2. Provide the closure date, defined by SACSCOC as the date when students are no longer *admitted*.

3. An explanation of how affected parties – students, faculty, and staff – will be informed of the impending closure.
4. If the institution is providing options for students to complete at another institution(s), provide copies of all planned communication from the institution and from the teach-out institution(s) related to the closure. All communication must demonstrate the institutions are making accurate statements about students' ability to transfer credits to the teach-out institution(s).
5. An explanation of how all affected students will be helped to complete their programs of study with minimal disruption or additional costs.
6. Explain whether the students subject to the teach-out plan will incur additional charges or other expenses because of the teach-out and, if so, how the students will be notified.
7. Copies of signed teach-out agreements with other institutions, if applicable.
8. A description of how faculty and staff will be redeployed or helped to find new employment.

Note: Do not submit individually identifiable student information.
