

NWCCU POLICIES | SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities monitors proposed changes to ensure that any substantive change to the educational mission, objectives, or programs of an institution does not adversely affect the capacity of the institution to continue to meet the Commission Standards. The Commission requires the institution to obtain prior approval of the substantive change before the Commission includes the change in the scope of the accreditation or preaccreditation granted to the institution.

All institutions accredited or preaccredited by NWCCU are required to notify and seek review and approval from the Commission prior to:

1. Any substantial change in the established mission or objectives of the institution;
2. Any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution;
3. The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from the existing offered educational programs, or method of delivery, from those that were offered since the last evaluation of the institution;
4. The addition of programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or preaccreditation;
5. Any change from clock hours to credits hours;
6. A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program;
7. The entering into a contract under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in Title IV, Higher Education Authorization (HEA) programs offers more than 25% of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs;
8. The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50% of an educational program's requirements including locations for teach-outs and branch campuses;
9. The acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution; or
10. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.

A comprehensive evaluation of the institution is required for extensive changes including, but not limited to:

1. The addition of the first program at a new degree level (including joint degree and dual degree);
2. A change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution;
3. The acquisition of or merger with another institution; or
4. The acquisition of any program or location of another institution.

The date of the Commission approval letter serves as the effective date on which the change is included in the institution's accreditation. Effective dates of changes are not retroactive.

Each institution is responsible for developing internal procedures to assure that it is in compliance with the Commission's substantive change policies and procedures. If the Commission determines that a substantive change has been initiated without approval, the Commission may issue an order for the institution to show cause as to why its accreditation or candidate status should not be terminated.

A comprehensive explanation of the Commission's policies and procedures regarding Substantive Change may be found in the Substantive Change Manual, which is available on the NWCCU website.

Adopted 1972

Revised 1978, 1994, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2013, 2016, 2018