

Undergraduate Certification Substantive Changes Policy

Overview

The substantive change process ensures that the high standards of the Undergraduate Certification process are maintained when programs undergo significant changes outside of their scheduled certification review. Programs are encouraged to consult with AUPHA in advance of any substantive changes to understand how those changes may impact their certification status. Programs must officially report any substantive changes to AUPHA upon implementation, as outlined in the policy below.

Definitions

AUPHA defines substantive changes as any significant departure from the last undergraduate certification review. These changes typically involve an adjustment to the program or curriculum that fundamentally changes the student experience.

Any of the following can be substantive changes:

- Adding a new track or suspending/discontinuing an existing track or concentration area
- A change in the mode of delivery, adding a mode of delivery, or changing/adding physical locations
- A major organizational change such as a merger, acquisition, or the program/concentration moving to new school/college/departmental home
- Substantial revisions to basic degree requirements or degree length
- A major change to mission/values/vision
- A shift to a new competency model not previously used
- A change that triggers a review by a higher accrediting authority (AACSB, CEPH, NASPAA, Higher Learning Commission, etc.)

Examples of changes that typically would not be substantive, regardless of program or university, include, but are not limited to:

- A change to the name of an existing program, track, or concentration
- A new program director (without any other changes)
- Regular updates to courses that include changes in assessments, assigned readings, course content or competency mapping.

Process

As the “big tent” for academic programs, AUPHA recognizes that the same change in two different programs may have very different effects. As a result, changes will be evaluated by the Undergraduate Program Committee on a case-by-case basis.

The UPC co-chairs will review the change to determine if it warrants additional scrutiny. If the co-chairs disagree on whether the change meets the threshold to be substantive, the full committee will be asked to consider the matter.

Certification Status	Time Frame for Change	Reporting Requirement
Program is in its self-study year.	Not needed. The program will report this change when they write their self-study.	For example, a program slated for review in 2030-2031 will have a self-study year of 2029-2030. If the change is implemented in the academic year 2029-2030, it will be reported in the program's self-study and reviewed by the assigned team.
Program is currently writing a self-study (and the self-study year has ended) or the program's self-study is currently under review.	Implemented during an ongoing review. For example, a program slated for the 2030-2031 cycle implements a change in 2030 after the 2029-2030 academic year has ended or implements a change in 2031 while their review is in process (prior to the Board vote).	If the co-chairs determine that a substantive change has been made that requires review, UPC will ask the program to provide updated responses to the affected criteria for the review team to consider. This is the only case in which a review team should consider evidence outside of a self-study year.
The program is certified and is between certification cycles.	If the program implements a change outside of the two periods identified above.	If the co-chairs determine that a substantive change has been made, the program will submit the substantive change report . Due dates for substantive change reports mirror that of progress reports and typically occur in January.

UPC will review substantive change reports when they review progress reports (typically in February each year) UPC will identify one of the following findings for the program:

1. The program remains in full compliance, even with the substantive change. In this case, no changes are made to its certification status or term.
2. The program is substantially compliant but must submit a progress report the following year to ensure they come into full compliance with all criteria. If the program remains out of compliance with some criteria upon submission of the progress report, they will have an additional progress report due the following year. Failure to come into full compliance upon submission of the second progress report will result in the program losing its certification status.
3. The program is out of compliance as a result of the change. In this case, the program is placed in probationary status. The program will be required to submit a progress report the following year. If the program remains out of compliance at that time, they will lose their certification status.
4. The program is substantially out of compliance as a result of the change. In this case, the program immediately loses its certification status.