



# Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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## **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN ACCREDITED SCHOOLS**

If a substantive change occurs in an accredited school, continuation of accredited status or inclusion of the substantive change in the institution's previous grant of accreditation or pre-accreditation shall require:

- Prior application to the Commission regarding the proposed change
- Approval of the application by the President
- A one- or two-day visit by a two-member team appointed by the President
- Subsequent approval by the Commission.

### **Examples of Substantive Change**

A school initiating or experiencing a substantive change since its last ACS WASC visit must so report and seek approval of the substantive change pursuant to ACS WASC Policy A5.2 in order to maintain its accreditation or candidacy status. Examples of a substantive change include, but are not limited to:

- Change in location of school
- Addition of or transfer of programs to new or different buildings
- Change in grade level configuration
- Change in type of school
- Change in ownership and/or control
- Change in legal status or form of control of the institution
- Change in authorizer
- Opening a branch campus or classroom extension
- Change in established mission or purposes
- Addition of degree or diploma-granting program
- Material change in financial position that threatens the school's ability to remain a going concern or otherwise threatens the school's ability to effectively support its operations
- Addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, in terms of either the content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when ACS WASC most recently evaluated the institution
- Notification of adverse action taken or threatened by a state or other accrediting agency (please see ACS WASC Policy A11.2 for examples of adverse actions)
- Any other change representing a significant departure in circumstances from those that were present when ACS WASC most recently evaluated the school.

## **Review of Substantive Changes**

All substantive changes must be reported within **30 days** to the Commission. Failure to notify ACS WASC as required of a substantive change is grounds for the Commission to issue an order to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. See ACS WASC Policy A11.3 for Review of Adverse Actions by Other Accrediting Agencies.

The Commission shall then undertake a prompt initial review of the substantive change to determine ACS WASC compliance. The President of the Commission, at his or her discretion, may schedule a visit of the school within **90 days** of the receipt of notice to make a compliance determination. An independent audit of the school's financial condition may also be required at the discretion of the President.

If after such initial review and opportunity for the school to respond, the Commission finds that the substantive change constitutes non-compliance with the standards of the Commission, the Commission shall issue an order to show cause as to why the school's status should not be withheld, with a time stated, to a candidate or accredited school. The school must be notified of the specific grounds for the Commission's adverse action, the specific standard(s) for which there has not been compliance, the nature of the action, and the right of the school to appeal if permitted by, and in accordance with, the Appeal Procedures in Policy A4.

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The Substantive Change Explanation form can be found on the ACS WASC website at: <http://www.acswasc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ACS-WASC-Substantive-Change-Explanation.doc>.

If a Substantive Change Visit is required, a visit fee will be billed.