Commission on English Language Program Accreditation
Guidelines for Reporting Substantive Change

Section 9 of the *CEA Policies and Procedures* provides the detailed substantive change policy, including possible Commission actions; the complete policy is available at www.cea-accredit.org.

Reporting Substantive Change

All accredited programs and institutions must promptly notify CEA in writing of any proposed substantive change in the program or institution since the most recent CEA accreditation review. This advance notice must be made prior to the change being implemented and must be reported using these Guidelines for Reporting Substantive Change document that each site receives with its letter of accreditation and with the annual report package. The report must include a thorough explanation of any proposed change and a list of affected standards with an explanation of how they will continue to be met following the change. The proposed change must be approved by the Commission prior to the change being included in the grant of accreditation.

The types of substantive changes that must be reported prior to the change taking place include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. any change in ownership, legal status or form of control, including a change in the relationship with departments within a host institution. (Request a copy of the "Application for continuance of accreditation" form from CEA and submit it, with documentation and a fee, 30 days prior to the change of ownership or change of control).
b. the acquisition of any other institution, or program or location of another institution.
c. 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 students have completed their program of study.
d. any change in mission
e. any change in location or the addition of an auxiliary location
f. any change in the type of students served (academic to nonacademic, for example)
g. any change in Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) certification
h. the addition of courses that represent a significant departure, in terms of either content or method of delivery, from those offered during the most recent accreditation evaluation, including distance education
i. the addition of courses or programs at a level below or a level above those included in the program or institution's current accreditation
j. a change in the means for determining student hours and/or a substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for the successful completion of any program of study
k. a substantial increase or decrease in the length of the program
l. an increase or decrease of more than 50% in distance education enrollment or educational offerings
m. a change in resources that would affect the program or institution's ability to provide its services

Staff will conduct an initial review of substantive change reports and will prepare a written report and recommendation for consideration by the Standards Compliance Committee (SCC). The SCC reviews all staff reports and recommendations, including primary materials, when necessary, and reports compliance issues to the full Commission with a recommendation for follow-up action, if any.

Consultation

When a change is under consideration, CEA staff should be consulted to determine whether it is a substantive or minor change and whether a substantive change report must be filed, and to assess how the change will affect the program or institution in terms of meeting the *CEA Standards.* CEA staff can provide detailed guidance regarding the standards to address, information to provide, and documentation to include. Please contact Masha Vassilieva, Director of Compliance, at mvassilieva@cea-accredit.org or (703) 665-3400 ext. 106 to schedule a consultation.

Guidelines

Some substantive changes require completion of a template. For others, CEA staff will provide a customized list of content and documentation requirements. For all substantive change reports that do not have a prescribed template or a customized list of requirements, it is important for CEA to know that affected standards continue to be met. In order to clearly identify proposed changes and their impact(s) on standards compliance, submit a report that includes the following information for each substantive change.

Part I: Information about the Program or Language Institution
At the beginning of your report, include the following information:

1. Name and location of the entity accredited by CEA, and name of host institution, if applicable
2. Scope of accreditation: (institutional, programmatic, or general/international)
3. Name and contact information for the person submitting the response

Part II: Substantive Change

1. State the substantive change, the reason(s) for or circumstances leading to the proposed change, and the implementation timeline. List each standard that will be affected. A consultation with CEA staff is strongly recommended.
2. Evidence of continued compliance with the standards affected by the change:

   For each affected standard,

   - briefly describe how the program or institution met each standard at the time accreditation was granted and before the proposed change. (Do not reproduce the content of the self-study report; provide a brief summary focusing on the areas and policies that will be or have been revised.)
   - describe how the program or institution will continue to meet each affected standard once the change takes place; include appropriate supporting documentation. (Do not use self-study template prompts. Contact CEA staff if you need guidance on which aspects of each standard to address.)
3. Include links to supporting documentation, as relevant. List supporting documentation by name and insert a hyperlink to each document (see the 2026 CEA Mechanics for Submission document and the Creating Hyperlinks and Zipping Documents for CEA webinar on the Resources page of the CEA website). Include a narrative description of the provided documents to explain their relevance/the reason they are included.

The main response document must be an editable Word file with links to supporting documentation. The main report document cannot be a read-only or PDF document.

Supporting documentation can be in any format. Do not embed supporting documents within the main response document. Supporting documentation must be included as separate files, with hyperlinks in the main report document.

Submission

- See the **2026 CEA Mechanics for Submission** document and the **Creating Hyperlinks and Zipping Documents for CEA** on-demand webinar on the Resources page of the CEA website.
- The required naming convention for the zipped file is Site Name SubChg YEAR descriptor (for example, Sample ELI SubChg 2025 NewPrg). Include the name of the host institution, if applicable.
- Reports must be submitted electronically as a single zipped file (to include the main report document as well as any supporting documentation) to Masha Vassilieva at mvassilieva@cea-accredit.org. If the zipped folder is too large to attach to an email, use this Substantive Change Reports upload link to securely submit your report
- Failure to submit the report per the guidelines may result in the report being returned to the site with a request to resubmit in accordance with the instructions.

Questions

Contact Masha Vassilieva, Director of Compliance, at mvassilieva@cea-accredit.org or (703) 665-3400 ext. 106 with any questions about the format or content of the substantive change report.